Vancouver Longshoremen, Resilient Solidarity, and the 1935 Interruption: Company Unionism 1923-1945

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Abstract

This thesis challenges the historiography that asserts the 1935 waterfront strike in Vancouver was a failed militant surge by a new radical union leadership in an otherwise twenty-year period of dormancy among the city's longshoremen. Using union documents, employer records, and interviews with workers, the thesis presents the entire company union era, between 1923 and 1944, as a period of developing solidarity and resistance. In this context the 1935 strike and the union's leadership were a product of, not a radical departure from that continuity. The thesis shows that despite two lost strikes in 1923 and again in 1935, the administrative structures the employers established produced a resilient culture of solidarity that was in place before Parliament acted in 1944 to provide longshoremen with the legal framework for union representation.

Keywords: labour; longshoremen; unions; strikes; solidarity

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Introduction

> We take the stand that we as workers have nothing in common with the employers." Harry Bridges, Charter President ILWU.[1]

On June 18 1935 approximately one thousand longshoremen peacefully approached the gates of Vancouver's Ballantyne Pier. In a strike/lock out position since June 4, the longshoremen, accompanied by unemployed workers, friends, and family members, including women and children, were marching to the Pier to protest the employment of strike breakers.[2] Witness John Stanton claimed that Vancouver's Chief of Police Foster quickly raised then lowered his gloved hand and a combined force of city, provincial, and special police attacked. They clubbed the dispersing workers off the dock-side railway tracks, chased them through the streets of the downtown east side, pursued them into the homes of private citizens, and tear-gassed a first-aid station set up by the longshore women's auxiliary. According to Stanton, no escape route was left open for the marchers. Dispersal was not the aim of the attack: it was a punitive show of force designed to break the union.[3] The incident produced twenty-eight injuries requiring medical attention and over one hundred arrests.[4] Sixteen workers served jail terms of between six to twelve months for their part in the march, including Vancouver and

1 Harry Bridges quoted in, Howard Kimeldorf, *Reds or Rackets: The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press,1988) p. 6.

2 *The Vancouver Province,* 19 June 1935. The 1935 strike has been called a strike and a lock-out. The employers maintained it was a strike most historians have also called it a strike. The union maintained it was a lock-out, but both union newspapers the *Heavy Lift* and *Ship and Dock* at various times called it a strike. The dispute is unusual in that following a union refusal to load "hot cargo" on a single vessel the employers simply declared the collective agreement at an end and discontinued its relationship with the union.

3 John Stanton, *Never Say Die!:The Life and Times of a Pioneer Labour Lawyer.* (Vancouver: Steel Rail Publishing, 1987) pp.5-7.

4 Ibid., p. 9.or *Ship and Dock.* 5 August 1935.

District Waterfront Workers Association (VDWWA) president Ivan Emery, who served three months for inciting a riot, and World War l veteran W. Squires who was sentenced to three years and five lashes for allegedly assaulting a strike breaker.[5] The dispute dragged on for six months while the union consistently attempted to re-open negotiations, but the Federation maintained its relationship with the VDDWA was over.[6] With strike funds exhausted and a ban on dock-side picketing allowing replacement workers to get to work, men began to drift back to work and the union called the strike off on December 9 1935.[7] Longshoremen were instructed to apply to the Federation for work and those deemed acceptable could join one of two new company unions, the Canadian Waterfront Workers Association (CWWA) or the Vancouver Longshoremen's Association (VLA). The Federal Government issued a Royal Commission Report, holding the union responsible for the Ballantyne incident and the strike, and Vancouver longshoremen subsequently endured another ten years of company unionism before the arrival of the ILWU in 1945.[8]

The "Battle of Ballantyne" was the climax of a bitter 1935 strike that marked the mid-point in twenty tumultuous years of company unionism on Vancouver's waterfront that began when the British Columbia Shipping Federation (the Federation) broke the International Longshoreman's Association (ILA) in 1923. There is very little historical literature on the 1935 strike and the Ballantyne incident and even less material on the

5 For sixteen workers sentenced see, *Man Along the Shore.* P.86, For Emery and Squires sentences see, *Ship and Dock,* Oct. 22 1935 and 19 Oct. 1935 respectively. In one incident police arrested a group of eleven men involved in the battle. When they later found out that five of them were strike breakers police claimed that they had made a mistake and arrested the five because they did not know which side they were on. At trial all six strikers were convicted of rioting and received sentences ranging from fines to six months in jail. None of the five strikebreakers were convicted of any crime despite the fact that one of them was carrying an illegal firearm. City of Vancouver Archives, (hereafter CVA) British Columbia Shipping Federation Business Files, Add. MSS 279, Loc.520-G-4, File 9, Bull to W.B. Farris, undated.

6 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Hall to Mitchell, 10 Dec. 1935.

7 Foster announced the ban on picketing the day after the Ballantyne incident. *The Vancouver Province,* 19 June 1935.

8 Canada, Department of Labour. *Findings And Report Of The Commissioner The Hon. Mr. Justice H.H. Davis. Re. Industrial Dispute On The Vancouver Waterfront Involving The Shipping Federation Of British Columbia, Limited, And The Longshore Workers At That Port.* Oct. 1935.

entire company union period, the unique work place culture, the industrial relations issues that precipitated the strike, and the culture of solidarity that survived it. Much of the limited collection either ignores these factors or presents the strike as a militant surge led by a newly elected radical union leadership in an otherwise period of dormant solidarity. In "Vancouver's Red Menace of 1935," Robert McCandless concluded that local politicians used the strike and anti-communist hyperbole to further their own careers.[9] *Man along the Shore,* published by pensioners from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 500 (ILWU), states that in 1935 the union underestimated the determination and preparedness of the employers to destroy independent unionism on the Vancouver waterfront for the second time in a dozen years.[10] Written as series of reminiscences by retired longshoremen, the book is an invaluable primary resource, but it does not elaborate upon the important level of employer determination and readiness. *The ILWU Story* published by the ILWU International's information department sums up the strike and the company union period in three paragraphs, concluding that for twelve years after 1923 there was very little union organization in B.C. ports, until a resurgence of agitation during the depression culminated in the Ballantyne incident and the 1935 strike.[11] The industrial relations issues surrounding the strike are not analysed, and nothing is said about the second company union period between 1935 and 1944. In *Fighting Heritage,* a series of essays highlighting the role of communist organizers in depression era disputes, Fred Wilson claims the union was defeated by an overwhelming combination of capital and government forces. He concluded that "the strike was lost, but the ideas won, and the militancy that grew from a small ineffectual company union has continued to this day". While Wilson is correct, he did not say exactly what "ideas" were won, nor does he show how the "militancy" is connected to today's ILWU. His concluding statement, "The heritage of today's ILWU is etched in blood along that waterfront, it will not be forgotten"

9 R.C. McCandless, "Vancouver's Red Menace of 1935: The Waterfront Situation", *B.C. Studies.* (Summer, 1974) pp.56-70.

10 ILWU Pensioners, *Man Along The Shore!: The Story of the Vancouver Waterfront As Told By the Longshoremen Themselves.* 1860-1975. (Vancouver: ILWU Pensioners, 1975) p.86.

11 International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, *The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unionism,* (San Francisco: ILWU, 2009) pp. 50-52.

is a call to arms, not an analysis.[12] In *Never Say Die* John Stanton, the ILWU's attorney during union's 1944 certification process, claimed that Ballantyne was the dividing point between all efforts at establishing an independent union on the Vancouver waterfront that went before and after it. Stanton makes a key point about the dividing line between the two company union periods but does not expand upon it. His two essays, one on the "Battle of Ballantyne" and a second on the ILWU's certification process, are valuable eye witness accounts, but he does not discuss the issues that precipitated the strike or analyse the post-strike company union period.[13] Andrew Parnaby provides a more analytical approach in *"Citizen Docker."* He places the strike within the context of the entire company union period 1923-1945. However, his focus is on scientific management techniques that were emerging during the early part of the twentieth century, and their implementation on the Vancouver waterfront. He claimed that following the 1923 strike, waterfront employers forced a paternalistic industrial management scheme called "welfare capitalism" on Vancouver longshoremen. He concluded that the 1935 strike and the destruction of the VDWWA were by-products of the depression and a resultant breakdown of the management scheme.[14] None of the above approaches examines how the administrative mechanisms the Federation established to control labour actually promoted solidarity among longshoremen before and after the strike.

This thesis will provide an alternative to the assertion that the company union period in Vancouver was an era of dormant solidarity, interrupted by a resurgent militancy in 1935. Instead it will argue, to a point, along with sociologist Rick Fantasia that trade unionism based on solidarity as a daily lived experience is by its nature radical, that solidarity is based on the day to day actions of workers on the job. It is a learned behaviour with an ebb and flow to it that can rise and fall as conditions change.

12 Fred Wilson, "The Bloody Road to Ballantyne", *Fighting Heritage: Highlights of the 1930's Struggle for Jobs and Militant Unionism in British Columbia.* Sean Griffin, ed. (Vancouver: Tribune Publishing, 1985) pp.65-74.

13 Stanton, *Never Say Die!*

14 Andrew Parnaby, *Citizen Docker: Making A New Deal On The Vancouver Waterfront 1919-1939.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

Fantasia maintained that developing "solidarity, equality, and democracy express the antithesis of capitalist values and are the essence of collective action, individualism, the core of capitalist activity, is confronted by collectivism."[15]

The thesis will present the company union period as an era of developing solidarity, wherein Vancouver longshoremen learned to cope with new administrative structures in an intermittent work environment, where the infrastructure, place of work, and work force composition changed on a daily basis. Their collective action developed in opposition to the development of the Federation whose growing pains as a labour management bureaucracy made industrial relations oppressive and capricious. The thesis will show that the union's program was consistent throughout the period, that the 1935 union leadership and their program were a product of, not a radical departure from, that continuity. It will show that the union's solidarity and job centred program were a consistent militant challenge to the Federation, even before 1935. It will show that the solidarity and militancy longshoremen displayed was not seditious it did not contain the political goals that are generally connected to the term radical. In an effort to counter Lenin's assertion that the "embryonic" solidarity of trade unionism required a vanguard to make it radical, Fantasia casts his definition of radical too wide.[16] Clearly he was trying to emphasise the importance of collective action as a challenge to the prerogative of unfettered capital on the job, but his definition of radical results in confusion. He is correct that the individualist essence of capitalism is confronted by collective action, but that action may not necessarily include the social and political goals associated with the term radical. Workers have acted collectively to obtain conservative concessions such as pensions that require a healthy capitalist system to maintain them. The Federation's inability to retain a long term consensus on hiring issues during the company union period validates Fantasia's assertion that collective action is the antithesis of capitalism. However, when the Federation was able to unite act collectively and crush the union their collective action was used to obtain conservative not radical goals. In *The Union*

[15] Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers.*(Berkely: University of California Press, 1988) p.237.

[16] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*. p.237.

Makes Us Strong David Wellman made it clear that the traditional job oriented militancy of longshoremen is not politically radical.[17] The ILWU`s charter president Harry Bridges claimed that longshoremen were interested in pork chops not politics.[18] Waterfront industry arbitrator Sam Kagel claimed that the goals of longshoremen "were all pure pork chop issues. They were not designed politically by Communists, Republicans, Democrats, or anybody else."[19] In Vancouver during the company union period many longshoremen would have balked at the assertion their aims were radical. In fact Andrew Parnaby showed that many members of the VDWWA were ex-soldiers and veterans of World War one who justified their demands based on their loyalty to Canada, as ex-soldiers and defenders of the empire.[20] E.P. Thompson asserted that class consciousness develops out of shared experience, a realization by some men that their interests have evolved "against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."[21] This paper will emphasise that the class consciousness, solidarity, collective action, and militancy longshoremen displayed between 1923 and 1945 was not dominated by an external vanguard or ideology aimed at societal reconstruction. As longshoremen began to understand their relationship in opposition to the Federation, their class consciousness became (according to Thompson's model) a grass roots challenge to the control of unfettered capital on the job. This thesis will show that the Federation attempted to crush their solidarity by branding it as a movement to restructure the economic organization of Vancouver under the guidance of a Muscovite

17 David Wellman, *The Union Makes Us Strong: radical Unionism On The SanFrancisco Waterfront.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) see pp.1-35.

18 Kimeldorf Howard, *Reds Or Rackets: The making Of Radical and Conservative unions on The Waterfront.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) pp.83, 84.

19 Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories.* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009) p.34.

20 Parnaby, *Citizen Docker:* see pp. 42,43, 101. Reacting to employer allegations that the VDWWA was under the influence of "Reds", the union's rank and file newspaper *Heavy Lift* published the following, "This paper does not concern itself with colours, red, green, blue, white or anything else does not enter into the deal. The measure we use is - is the man working for the betterment of longshoremen?" The paper claimed that "members accept a man as they find him, not as the Federation would like to paint him." *Heavy Lift*, 10 November, 1933.

21 E.P. Thompson *The Making of The English Working Class.* (London: Penguin Books, 1980) pp.8, 9.

cadre because as 1930s longshoremen Paddy Morris asserted, they [the union] simply wanted to "take some dough" out of the employer's pockets.[22]

The paper will show that within this context of developing solidarity over a twenty year period the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier" and the 1935 strike were an interruption, a period when waterfront employers simply abandoned industrial relations. It will show that it was the Federation that became aggressive, and rather than confront the issues and establish new forms of labour management in the middle of a depression they retreated into the familiarity of an all-out battle with labour, putting together a coalition of corporate, political, and propaganda forces to crush the union. However, the victory represented the peak of the Federation's power: it had "cleaned up" the work force but the administrative structures they created in 1923 remained, producing a resurgent solidarity that could not be as easily crushed in the war era as it had been in1935. The thesis will show that while government legislation provided a legal framework for the ILWU in Vancouver, as it had in the United States, a culture of solidarity and collective action was in place before Parliament acted, and this culture was as important as legislation in the creation of a particular set of class and industrial relations on the Vancouver waterfront.

The thesis will add to the large collection of work on longshore solidarity worldwide and in particular provide a Canadian perspective to the American literature on the development of the ILWU during the company union era.[23] While there is a dearth of historical literature on the development of Vancouver's ILWU, there is an extensive

[22] Ottilie Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity: Pacific Coast Unionism, 1929-1938.* (Tacoma: Pacific Coast Maritime History Committee, 1998). pp. 70, 71.

[23] There is an extensive collection of international literature on longshoring, as an issue vital to world trade, ports, and port labour were often the arena of early labour struggles that had significant local and national economic implications. Longshore solidarity, and strikes have consequently been the frequent subject of diligent scrutiny by political, commercial, labour, and academic organizations. For longshoring in New Zealand see Bert Roth, *From Hand Barrows to Straddles: Unionism on the Auckland Waterfront.* (Auckland: Reed Education, 1993). For longshoring in Europe see, Vernon Jensen, *Hiring of Dock Workers and Employment Practices in the Ports of New York, Liverpool, London, Rotterdam and Marseilles.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964). On Hawaii see Sanford Zalburg, *A Spark is Struck: Jack Hall and the ILWU in Hawaii*. (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979).

collection on the development of the ILWU in America's west coast ports. American academics and union historians have carefully chronicled the 1934 strike in U.S ports, the administrative structures of their company union period and their importance in the development of a culture of solidarity that is a cornerstone of today`s ILWU. Beginning with the destruction of the ILA between 1919 and 1922, American longshoremen endured a dozen years of company unionism culminating in a bitter 83 day strike in 1934.[24] The struggle precipitated an outbreak of corporate vigilantism and violence that resulted in the deaths of seven workers. Despite the violence, longshoremen stood firm in their solidarity until the federal government intervened with an arbitration award that granted them union recognition, equalization of earnings, and union dispatchers.[25] The victory is celebrated every year by west coast longshoremen; surviving 1934 strikers are revered as charter members of the ILWU, and their stories are regularly retold in commemorative union publications.[26] The official *ILWU Story* cites the 1934 strike as a signature event in the creation of the union, and it's well known culture of solidarity.[27]

In his study of longshore culture, *The Portland Longshoremen,* historian and longshoreman William Pilcher claimed that "the effect of the strike on Pacific Coast longshoremen was similar to that of a successful revolutionary war on a people." He added that "the battles grow somewhat more important and more magnificent in each telling, and the principal figures in some of these [battles] have almost the stature of George Washington and John Paul Jones."[28] He asserted that this historical memory

[24] Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s.* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990) pp.127-155. On the coast wide destruction of the ILA and centralized hiring under company control 1919-1922 see Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity,* pp.1, 2.

[25] Charles Larrowe, *Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States.* (New York: Lawrence Hill and Co.,1972) pp.90-93.

[26] For examples of this commemorative tendency see *The Dispatcher,* (San Francisco: International Longshore and Warehouse Union) *May 15th 1934: A historical Perspective.* (San Francisco: International Longshore and Warehouse Union, 2009)*The ILWU Story* pp.4-8., *The Men Along the Shore and the Legacy of 1934.* (An Historical Exhibit by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, 2008).

[27] *The ILWU Story,* pp. 4-7.

[28] William Pilcher, *The Portland Longshoremen: A Dispersed Urban Community.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972) p.115.

provided younger workers with a level of militancy to measure their own solidarity against, and those younger longshoremen welcomed a strike in the 1970s as an opportunity to prove their mettle to remaining 34 strikers.[29] In his study of longshore militancy, *The Union Makes Us Strong,* sociologist David Wellman claimed that the 1934 strike gave longshoremen "a social charter," a bedrock foundation for the solidarity that the ILWU is known for. He argues a militant union culture expanded from its power base in the hold of a ship with the rank and file member to include the dispatch hall, the union hall, rotation hiring, rotating union leadership, job control, contract negotiations, a democratic constitutional structure, a unique waterfront language, and an esprit de corps and brotherhood that extended to all aspects of a longshoreman's life, defining who he or she is. He concluded that despite over fifty years of successful collective bargaining, the militant union and the Shipping Federation along the west coast of the United States do not like each other.[30] Wellman and Pilcher's cultural studies highlight the solidarity promoting aspects of rotation hiring, the dispatch hall, and a rank and file controlled union, however they focus on the post 1934 period, after the federal government had intervened in the waterfront labour process.

Today Vancouver's ILWU, like its affiliates to the south, is a pragmatic, rank and file, union with a culture of solidarity that maintains a condition of mutually assured antagonism with B.C's waterfront employers. Vancouver longshoremen cannot cite a seminal strike victory as a touchstone and a rallying cry for the birth of that collective impulse. However this thesis will show that in 1923 the B.C. Shipping Federation established the same administrative structures and control mechanisms to curb solidarity that were implemented in American ports. It will show that the factors which American historians claim promoted solidarity among American longshoremen following the 1934 strike were established and promoted solidarity among Vancouver longshoremen as early as 1923. It will show that the 1935 strike and the "Battle of Ballantyne" are as significant a turning point in the development of the ILWU in Vancouver as the 1934

[29] Ibid. p.48.

[30] David Wellman, *The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism On The San Francisco Waterfront.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

strike was south of the border. It will show that in 1935 despite the Federation's ability to put together a coalition to crush the strike they were unable to prevent the administrative system they had created from producing a renewed solidarity. The "Ballantyne incident" represented the limit of the Federation's power, it was a turning point that pragmatic employers would quickly be forced to recognize. Finally as a longshoreman of 36 years, I hope to add my work to that of Stan Weir and William Pilcher, both longshoremen who took an important step for labour and elected to write their union's history before others did it for them.

Chapter 1.

The Federation

> The Employers organized the longshoremen. No question about it, they were the best organizers we had. Jack Maurrey, IWW.[1]

By the third decade of the 20th century Vancouver was becoming a major center of sea going trade. To meet the labour requirements of a modern industrialized port the BC Shipping Federation elected to restructure the management of longshore labour in the aftermath of a strike in1923. Designed to establish the Federation as a governing body, and to eliminate longshore militancy, their plan actually produced an industrial environment of instability and mistrust that ironically laid the foundation for a resilient labour solidarity. The Federation's restructuring process and its failure to provide a stable working environment are the subject of this chapter.

After World War One, Shipping Federations on the west coast of North America transformed waterfront industry and work. Spending on rail lines, warehouses, and concentrated docking facilities created clear cut lines of demarcation that separated the docks from other industries. There was now, as historian and longshoreman Stan Weir claimed, "work on the docks," and longshoring had become a full time occupation.[2]

At the same time in the aftermath of the continent-wide labour unrest and general strikes that followed World War I, dock operators joined other employers throughout the United States and Canada in an assault on the power of organized labour. To curb the

1 Kimeldorf, *Reds or Rackets.* p.76.

2 Stan Weir, *Singlejack Solidarity.* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2004) pp.257, 258.

influence of craft unionism and prevent emerging industrial unions from obtaining waterfront jurisdiction, Pacific Coast Shipping Federations managed to break the ILA on the United States west coast between 1919 and 1921.[3] They established open shops, company unions, and centralized hiring under Federation control in each port.[4] They replaced the representative unionism of the ILA with a labour relations regime loosely based on the wave of scientific management that swept North America during the early decades of the twentieth century. Historian Harry Braverman claimed that scientific management "enters the workplace not as the representative of science, but as the representative of management masquerading in the trappings of science."[5] On the waterfront the "trappings of science" included the employment of professional managers to deal with labour as a behavioural science. These managers implemented welfare capitalism, a crude form of paternalistic social engineering designed to give workers the impression that they had a stake in their industry, make them good citizens, stop them from establishing democratic unions, and prevent them from succumbing to radical impulses.[6] For American longshoremen, "scientific management" simply meant more work for less money, no security, speed ups, and poor safety, in an increasingly oppressive industrial relations environment.

In Vancouver the port, like its neighbours to the south, was about to embark on a period of unprecedented growth. Tonnage handled in the port grew from 496000 tons in 1923 to 4 million tons in 1937. To move the cargo, dock operators began a decade of heavy investment in infrastructure. They built Ballantyne Pier in 1923, Terminal Dock,

3 Ibid., p.32.

4 On the establishment of Shipping Federations in west coast ports see Kimeldorf, *Reds or Rackets.* p.15. For a discussion of the company union period in individual ports on the United States west coast see Ottilie Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity: Pacific Coast Unionism 1929-1938.* (Tacoma: Pacific Coast Maritime History Committee, 1998) pp.20-38.

5 Harry Braverman., *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century.* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) p.86.

6 On scientific management see David Montgomery, *Workers Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labour Struggles.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp.32-47. For scientific management in Canada see James W. Rinehart, *The Tyranny of Work: Alienation and the Labour Process.* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace and Company Ltd, 1996) p. 23-71. For scientific management on the Vancouver docks see Parnaby, *Citizen Docker.*

Terminal Grain, and Alberta Pacific in 1924, Pier BC in 1927, Alberta Pool in 1928, and Mainland Pacific in 1929.[7] During this period, technology began to change the character and speed of longshore work. Vancouver's dock operators no longer depended on the capricious forces of nature to transport goods. Steam, oil, and rail had replaced wind and horsepower in the movement of cargo. A modern industrial infrastructure of belts, winches, jitneys, and spouts moved a diverse collection of cargo, including food and other perishable goods, through the port on a tight schedule. Cargo had to be stowed tight to capacity to prevent chafing, damage, and dangerous shifting at sea. Multiple commodities, had to be loaded to prevent cross commodity contamination, and cargo for different ports of call had to be stowed in discharge sequence to prevent double handling, damage, and subsequent loss of time. To maintain quality, specialty cargoes such as silk had to be quickly transferred from ships to waiting rail cars and shipped to eastern garment districts.[8] Larger hold capacities, deck winches, jitneys, and the knowledge required to handle a multitude of commodities made longshoring an increasingly skilled occupation. Longshoremen required the ability to winch cargo into ships' wings. They had to be familiar with a multitude of shifting techniques, tackle, and tools. They had to know the breaking strain of wire, the lifting capacity of winches, and the safe working load of booms. The work situation and cargo varied from day to day, sometimes from hour to hour; the job required quick thinking, independence, and adaptability.

Vancouver employers, like those south of the border, realized it was simply no longer expedient to hire men at the ship's side or at the longshore hall, employ them until the vessel was finished, and not insure their availability for the next job. Men such as Harry Walters, who was frequently taken out of his gang and sent to drive "tricky winches," or Scotty Milne who "could land a load on an egg" were a valuable commodity

[7] *Man Along the Shore,* p.73. By contrast only one dock has opened in Vancouver's inner harbour since 1979. Tonnage figures are from "What Is The Shipping Federation," *Harbour and Shipping,* Feb. 1937. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-3, File 4.By 1929 there were 38 companies in the B.C. Shipping Federation, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5. For full list see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-2, File 14.

[8] CVA, Add.MSS 279, box 23, file # 2. Negotiation minutes, Nov.12 1929. Quoted in Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* p.90.

whose skills were established and maintained over time by consistent employment.[9] The Federation required a skilled, permanent, work force available to all dock operators at a moment's notice. However, the fluctuating nature of shipping and subsequent intermittent employment was a major impediment to the maintenance of such a work force. The problem for individual employers was how to keep a surplus pool of skilled men available on days without a ship. A dock operator may require one hundred longshoremen with specific cargo skills one day and none the next day when the ship sailed and the berth lay empty. The same employer may require a completely different set of longshoremen with different cargo skills a day or week later.[10]

In 1923 Vancouver's ILA went on strike to increase wages and expand their jurisdiction to include cargo checkers and foremen.[11] The Federation used the strike as an opportunity to restructure the longshore hiring process. They claimed the union was "under the influence of a "red element" and had to be "cleaned up."[12] Isolated with no international affiliation remaining on the west coast, and unable to prevent strike breakers under the protection of Colonel Foster from working, the strike was lost and the Vancouver ILA broken.[13]

9 *Man Along The Shore,* pp. 64, 93.

10 The ability to supply men during peak and slack periods is summarized by Crombie in a report to the Joint Industry Advisory Committee, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 3, 7 Dec 1934. For a summation of The Federation's goals regarding labour see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File 12, J. Hall to Federation Directors, 8 Jan. 1936.

11 Other demands were commodity premiums for lumber, logs, trucking wheat, and the right to refuse work in the event there was a dispute with other workers aboard a ship. See CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 4, Shipping Federation Memo, 1923.

12 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc.521-A-3, File 6, Shipping Federation notice, 19 Oct.1923.

13 The exception to company unionism on the west coast was Tacoma where the ILA maintained a local throughout the company union era. In Vancouver 625 of 1007 ILA men were blacklisted after the1923 strike. *Man Along The Shore!,* p.80.

With independent unionism crushed and an open shop established, the Vancouver Federation followed America's scientific management model.[14] They envisioned a waterfront with an efficient permanent work force, devoid of labour militancy, dominated by a united, battle-ready Shipping Federation. They announced they would have no further dealings with the ILA, and intended to enter the business of labour management, hiring, and dispatch on a full-time basis.[15] To maintain skilled men at their beck and call, they registered approximately 900 permanent and surplus longshoremen for work under centralized Federation management. In an intermittent work environment centralized hiring kept a surplus labour pool of men available at the Federation hall ready to work for a multitude of employers. To communicate with a fluctuating labour force in a multi-employer work place, they created the VDWWA, as a compliant company union designed to carry information downward from employer to employee. The VDWWA was contractually, forbidden to strike. They were obligated, to support the existing form of Government in Canada, to reject radical agencies, and to promote good relations between its members and the employers. To maintain full control of the labour force, only men with Federation-issued identity cards were to be selected for work from employer approved lists.[16] The Federation claimed every effort would be made to equalize earnings and rotate the work. However, they maintained the right to

[14] The company union plan that was eventually emulated up and down the coast was created in Seattle by the head of the Seattle Waterfront Employer's Association Frank Foisie who was later promoted to the presidency of the coast wide employers group. Foisie and Vancouver labour manager Major Crombie maintained regular correspondence during the company union period and Foisie eventually testified on the Federation's behalf at the Royal Commission hearings following the 1935 strike. For a synopsis of the Seattle system and brief biography of Foisie see Charles Larrowe, *Shape-up and Hiring Hall: A Comparison of Hiring Methods and Labor Relations on the New York and Seattle Waterfronts.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955)pp.92-94.

[15] On the mandate of the Federation see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File 12 Hall to Directors, 8 Jan. 1936. On re-organization following the 1923 strike see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Crombie to VDWWA, 27 April 1924. On centralized dispatch see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-6, File 4, Employment Services of Canada to Crombie, 12 April 1924.

[16] On Federation hiring see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-6 File 4, Employment Services of Canada to Crombie, 12 April 1924, On identification cards see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Crombie to VDWWA, 22 March 1924. So strict was Crombie regarding ID cards, he demanded that the warden of Oakalla jail return the card of a man sentenced to three months incarceration to the Federation, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Crombie to Warden Oakalla jail, 24 March 1924.

reject men they determined were inefficient.[17] Men the employers deemed the most efficient were organized into ship and dock gangs (work crews) that were dispatched as a unit before surplus men.[18] Coveted gang positions were determined solely by the Federation and were by no means secure. Surplus men required to supplement gang personnel on specific cargo or due to illness were selected by employers at the hall.[19]

To manage the restructured waterfront, the employers hired World War One veteran and former Federation chauffer Major William Claude Crombie. Hired at three times the average longshoreman's wage, Crombie was aware that he had been given an opportunity he intended to capitalize on by making himself indispensable as an "expert" in the management of waterfront labour. He announced that "efficiency must be the sole criterion for the employment of men, management decisions should never be clouded by sympathy."[20] He claimed that to create an efficient labour pool, the Federation must "build up and maintain" a workforce of permanent workers and suitable surplus men for peak loads and [the] balance of labour, must be in the hands of the Federation."[21] He added that the Federation should always be prepared to crush militancy, and took steps to put the employers on a permanent war footing. In a 1924 report to the Federation's President, he claimed that the waterfront required a "Fighting Federation" solidly behind him. The process would require the complete cooperation of Federation members. He asserted any decision "once approved must be backed to the bitter end in spite of any circumstances or pressure brought to bear." He suggested a financial state of readiness should be maintained by a per ton charge on cargo for a permanent strike fund.

17 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 1 Crombie to VDWWA, 2 Oct. 1933. 1930 and 1934 collective agreements stated that equality of service was not always obtainable therefore strict rotation cannot be implemented, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 3, collective agreements clause B.

18 Work crews called gangs were dispatched to a ship as a unit. A typical gang was made up of 11 men including a pair of winch drivers. These numbers were supplemented by surplus workers from the hall contingent upon the commodity to.be loaded or discharged. CVA, *International Warehouse and Longshore Union*, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7 File, 12.

19 For the composition of gangs, dispatch of surplus men, and lack of security in gangs see *Man Along The Shore!* pp.61, 99,70. Or see Heavy Lift, 27 March 1934.

20 CVA, Add. Mss 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 7, Crombie to all companies, 2 Oct 1933.

21 CVA Add.MSS 279, Loc. 520-f-4, file 4, Crombie to Chairman of labour committee, 17 Dec. 1923.

Customers would be compensated by a guarantee that their cargo would never be impeded by a strike. He claimed strike committees should be maintained in a constant state of readiness, a doctor hired to handle strike breakers' injuries, a publicity committee established to oversee propaganda, and Ballantyne Pier converted into a strike breaker fortress in the event of a labour dispute.[22] To promote their interests in the wider economic community the Federation appointed directors Colonel Foster and A. Parkhurst as representatives to a General Shipping Committee in association with the Board of Trade, and the Merchants Guild.[23]

To maintain discipline, prevent militancy, promote efficiency, and solidify the labour department's position as an independent management agency, Crombie recognized that information was power. To collect information the Federation employed several spies. Some of these spies appeared to be amateurs, such as the prospective fifth columnist who offered information for "big money" scribbled in a barely legible hand on a scrap of paper.[24] More professional services were provided by five private security companies.[25] The most prolific informant was operative #3 from Pratt Security Services who provided information on suspected IWW members, militants, radicals, and communists within the VDWWA. In 1934 Pratt agencies boasted that they could provide Crombie with information from an operative on the union negotiation committee.[26] Private security service information was supplemented by reports from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), city police, and corporate security agencies working for employers such as the Canadian Pacific Railroad.[27] The quest to root out militancy included direct intimidation of individual longshoremen. Applying to return to work after the 1923 strike Jim Will was asked by Crombie, what does ILA stand for? When Will

22 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, file 4, Crombie to Keely, 1924 strike report.

23 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File 10, Special Shipping Federation meeting,14 May 1924.

24 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-F-2, File 5, Anonymous to Crombie.

25 The five security companies were Theil Detective Agency, Burns Detective Agency, BC Detective Agency, Roberts Detective Agency and Pratt Security, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-F-2, File 5.

26 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 2, Pratt Security to Crombie, 30 Nov. 1935.

27 For more on police reports concerning communists on the waterfront see Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* pp. 147-150.

replied International Longshoremen's Association, Crombie sarcastically countered with "no, it stands for I lost all."[28] The Federation used discipline hearings to intimidate men into becoming informants. At his hearing W.O. Ohori was accused of being a union agitator, a "talker." When he vehemently denied the accusation Federation officials unsuccessfully attempted to badger him into naming any "talkers" within his gang.[29] Whether it was false, based on rumours, or even a matter of mistaken identity, collected information was added to the files of longshoremen and on occasion carelessly used to detrimental effect. For example longshoreman Ed Long was dismissed and re-hired off and on during the period because he had the same name as a known union agitator who had been dismissed after the 1923 strike. The Federation's determination to stamp out even perceived militancy created an atmosphere of instability and intrigue, where men seen simply talking to Crombie were viewed with suspicion by other workers.[30]

Despite Crombie's efforts to present a unified front, the co-operation among employers that crushed the 1923 strike was soon replaced by competition for labour. Employers used to hiring men without restrictions bridled at the rules associated with a labour pool. Individual dock operators were content to share labour during slow periods, when the system kept longshoremen available by allowing them to work for other employers. However, when that same operator had a ship to work, co-operation and sharing were abandoned. Contrary to dispatch procedure foremen hired men at the dispatch hall disregarding Federation manning lists or rotation procedure. They ordered men over the phone, hired men at the side of the ship, and hired non-union men without informing the Federation.[31] On February 24 1924 the VDWWA reported that of seventy-

[28] *Man Along The Shore.* p.80.

[29] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-5, File 2, Notes from hearing, 17 July 1936.

[30] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 3, Crombie to VDWWA, 11 Dec. 1924.

[31] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File1, Crombie to all companies on hiring men over the phone, 9 April 1927, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517 –F-4, File 2, VDWWA to Crombie on hiring men at the side of the ship, 28 Jan. 1924, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-F-4, File 3, VDWWA to Crombie on hiring non-union men, 21 July 1924.

two men working on Ballantyne Pier only twenty had been hired through the Federation.[32]

When shortages of skilled men appeared almost immediately after the end of the 1923 strike individual employers unwittingly paved the way for a militant resurgence by hiring experienced ex-ILA men that Crombie had deemed too militant for the new work-force.[33] They hired ex-ILA workers to fill in on VDWWA gangs instead of men off the Federation's surplus list at the hall. Once they were on the payroll, employers laid off VDWWA men and kept the more skilled ILA men to finish jobs. Faced with the fact that the employers intended to continue hiring the experienced ILA men, the VDWWA and Crombie brought them into the union.[34] However, once they were in the VDWWA, employers who were previously reluctant to break ranks and hire them without Federation approval, began to lay off VDWWA gangs and hire the ex-ILA men.

Problems arose with the gang system implemented after the strike. Crombie understood that to keep skilled men available for peak as well as slow times, some form of equalization of earnings had to be implemented. He hoped that rotation hiring would make all gangs equally competent, interchangeable parts in an efficiently run industrial machine.[35] It was a plan he was never able to deliver on. Competing employers were simply not prepared to wait while the work force gained the necessary experience to form a collection of equally talented gangs. They developed favourite gangs and ordered them for work, disregarding rotation procedure. When employers had work they

[32] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, VDWWA to Shipping Federation, 24 Feb. 1924.

[33] On skilled labour shortages and hiring of ex-ILA men see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 1, Crombie to all Companies, 22 Sept 1925, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-5, File 1, Crombie to Federation, 6 Jan. 1926, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-5 File 7, Dispatcher to Crombie, 24 July 1925. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Dispatcher to Crombie, Ex-ILA men being picked for work at the side of the ship on Ballantyne Pier. 10 June 1924.

[34] For Crombie urging they be brought into the union see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 4, Crombie to Kealey, 16 Jan. 1924. For the Union motion see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Union motion, 13 June 1924. For example Crombie admitted men such as J. Nelson an efficient winch driver were valuable in a skilled labour shortage despite their previous ILA affiliations see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-5, File 1, Crombie to Federation, employee report, 6 Jan. 1926.

[35] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2 File 8, Crombie to Burns, 8 May 1929.

demanded their preferred gangs. When the ship sailed they dismissed the men to work elsewhere until the next vessel arrived, and then they broke dispatch rules to get them back.[36] To bring stability to the gang dispatch and distribute the work, Crombie devised a preferred gang system based on commodities. Gangs were rated as preferred, lumber, general cargo, or log gangs. They were further rated on second choices: for example, when there were no logs, a preferred log gang could be dispatched as second choice lumber gang if all lumber gangs were working. Gangs were to be dispatched in rotation within their specialty designation, the gang with the least hours dispatched first.[37] However, in practice, when employers finished loading a commodity, they simply kept their preferred gangs to load cargo outside their specialty designation, frustrating Crombie, longshoremen, and those employers prepared to comply with dispatch rules.[38] Employers protested when a competitor breached dispatch rules and hoped to avoid detection when they broke the rules.[39]

Crombie warned employers that as long as they sidestepped dispatch procedure, gangs would never gain enough experience to obtain an acceptable level of parity on all commodities. He claimed "stevedoring companies will never know the real working ability of the gangs as a whole if they restrict their orders to a comparatively favoured few."[40] Ignoring his call for patience, employers dissatisfied with a gang's performance simply looked to the surplus labour pool and demanded a different gang. If they were unable to find satisfactory gangs, they demanded changes in gang personnel. Careful to maintain the ultimate right to reject men, they were always able to circumvent agreed

36 For various protests see CVA, Add. MSS 279, 521-C-2, File 8.

37 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-1, File 1, Crombie to Dispatcher, 14 Dec 1933.

38 For an example see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-7, File 1, For a summation of problems associated with the gang system and dispatch by Crombie see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 4, Crombie to Captain Baird, 29 July 1935.For a summation of the insecurity of gangs by longshoremen see *Heavy Lift*, 9 November 1934.

39 For Federation directors discussing their right to ignore gang rotation procedure based on commodity specialization, see CVA Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File 12, minutes of Federation directors meeting, 18 June 1932. For example of an employer protesting another hiring outside Federation rules see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, 520-E-6, File 2, F.W. Peters, CPR. Superintendent to Crombie, 8 Aug 1924.

40 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-4, File 8, Federation Bulletin, 31 Jan. 1931.

upon dispatch rules and protocols without fear of penalties. Crombie realized that the unfair dispatch was a focal point for longshore discontent, but with his own position dependent upon employer approval, he could do little about it.[41] He was left with no choice but to constantly rework the composition of the gangs and surplus work force in an attempt to pacify the employer's thirst for efficiency.[42]

As a result longshoremen faced the instability of constant evaluation, classification, re-assignment, and dismissal. Gangs were reviewed by employers on a yearly basis.[43] Employers were given lists of surplus men and asked to rate their efficiency as "A, B, or C." Space was provided for additional information that employers filled with comments such as "lazy," "too old," "windy," [talkative] "lacking pep," or "has been." For more immediate evaluation foremen were asked to rate men daily and return their assessment to the Federation on dispatch slips.[44] The Federation hired a physician on retainer to examine compensation cases, deducted the cost of his services from the longshoremen's paycheques, and then added the medical information to classification documents.[45] Dismissals were frequent. For example between January 25 and February 26 1924 Crombie called for the dismissal of 35 men. Three months later on June 21

41 There are several examples of Crombie conceding that the dispatch was unfair to longshoremen. For two see CVA, Add .MSS 279 520-c-2, File 2, or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc 521-C-2, File 8.

42 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 8, Crombie to Burns, 8 May 1929.

43 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-1, File 2, Gang Rating Sheet.

44 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 1 and 1(a), Crombie to all Companies, 1 June 1931. In one case Empire Stevedoring rated only 14 out of 117 spare board men as adequate, CVA, Add. MSS 279, 517-G-6, Loc. File 11, Empire Stevedoring to Crombie, 29 Nov. 1932, In another example Pacific Lighterage Corp. rated 14 of 68 names as adequate, the rest were described as lazy, useless, or too old, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 7, Classification list, 11 Aug. 1932. For a file of Crombie reviewing men for VDWWA membership with notations such as "useless", "red", or "better material available" see CVA Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-5, File 1. For another file where a twenty-three year longshoreman is dismissed as a "has-been" see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-5, File 1, 26 June 1925.

45 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-5, File 5, Crombie to Jones, 29 Aug.1932.

1924 the Federation concluded that an unsatisfactory class of casuals was being maintained and the entire casual work force needed to be culled.[46]

Crombie's efforts to solidify the labour management department's position as an independent governing body and establish a measure of legitimacy among longshoremen was further hampered by a lack of consensus and apathy in the boardroom. When the Federation was unable to secure a pay cut in 1931 Kingsley Navigation simply resigned from the employer association and began to hire men on their own.[47] There were employers who questioned Federation policy, such as Dingwall and Cotts who claimed that longshore wages should be increased to match the wages of American longshoremen.[48] Federation President D. Cameron resigned in 1931 when the board demanded that longshoremen cross a picket line at Barnet Mills.[49] When Crombie made small concessions on hours of work for jitney drivers, employers who advocated a harder line claimed it set a poor precedent for future mechanization issues.[50] Greer and Sons suggested that to keep the men fresh and to spread the work around, gangs should be ordered for four, not eight hours.[51] The lack of consensus was compounded by poorly attended Federation board meetings. Successive presidents complained of apathy, and "no quorum" and "no business conducted" became a recurrent theme in board meeting minutes.[52] In 1928 Federation President Burns complained that only two board members had attended a recent meeting.[53] When only one half of the board attended a contract meeting at the end of 1933, a frustrated

46 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2 Shipping Federation to VDWWA Secretary, 25, 30th, 31st Jan 1924, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 3, Crombie to VDWWA, 21 July 1924.

47 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-5, File 10.

48 CVA, Add. MSS Loc. 520-D-1, File 10, Dingwall and Cotts to Shipping Federation, 23 Feb.1935.

49 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.521-C-2 , File 10, Cameron to the Directors of the Shipping Federation, 28 Oct 1931.

50 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 5, F.J. Pickett to J. Hall, 13 April 1935.

51 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 11, Greer and Sons to Shipping Federation, 15 Nov. 1932.

52 For several examples of poor attendance see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 2.

53 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 2, Burns to Federation executive, 14 Nov. 1928.

Federation president complained, "In view of the recent amalgamation of the VDWWA with the other two bodies of longshoremen and the aspirations which this amalgamated body has regarding labour conditions, I believe it is necessary that the directors should make a special effort to attend meetings so that they may be familiar with what is going on and may be able to bring their informed judgement to bear on important decisions which will have to be made in the future"[54] But the directors did not attend and almost a year later amid difficult negations and deteriorating industrial relations, Crombie complained to members that the monthly meeting of directors "adjourned today, no business transacted in the absence of a quorum."[55] The problem continued after the contract was signed in November 1934. Amid a labour shortage Crombie could still not get members to attend and he caustically claimed that "owing to the apathy of the membership, it must be construed that the situation regarding the shortage of men is of no interest to the general membership."[56] The apathy and in fighting within the Federation's board room heightened the level of instability in the work place. In an environment of uncertainty longshoremen began to look to each other and collective action to provide a measure of security.

As the 1930s began, the Federation's efforts to eliminate real unionism, centralize dispatch, and share a skilled compliant workforce had created an atmosphere of instability, suspicion, and uncertainty. The employers wanted competent compliant longshoremen at their disposal at all times. Yet they were unwilling to take any responsibility for them during slow periods. The competitive nature of capital made them unwilling to accept any workers other than those they perceived as the best, even when they were already employed on another ship, or not available due to previously agreed

[54] The International Log Handlers Association, and remnants of the ILA amalgamated with the VDWWA in Oct 1933. While the union had not yet presented formal contract demands the Federation knew that no more classifications, equalized earnings, full control of the membership and 100% of the work were likely to be on the union's wish list, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 1, VDWWA to Shipping Federation, 10 Oct 1933, the quote is from, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 2, Shipping Federation to all members, 11 Oct 1933.

[55] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 2, Crombie to all Shipping Federation members, 14 Aug.1934.

[56] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 5, Crombie to all Shipping Federation members, 28 Nov.1934.

upon dispatch rules. They jealously guarded their right to refuse to employment, making sure it was written into the collective agreement and all subsidiary dispatch rules.[57] They valued rules and the labour management department in slow periods, and treated them as a nuisance to be avoided, or obeyed by competitors during peak periods.

The situation placed Crombie and the labour management bureau in a precarious and frustrating position. He warned the employers that centralized dispatch had created a state of disconnect between Federation members and longshoremen.[58] The employers did not know the men they hired and the longshoremen had no connection to the companies. In an atmosphere of anonymity, Crombie claimed, the employers developed a habitual disregard for dispatch rules that undermined his legitimacy with the union.[59] By 1929 he concluded that "non-rotation will always cause problems because "excepting under a strict rotation system, the factor of the unknown transactions which almost hourly take place with the employers inside the dispatching office lend a continual air of mystery and suspicion to the work of the dispatchers."[60] In 1930 he started a monthly bulletin to curb the violations, educate employers, and keep them abreast of current working practices. He claimed the bulletin's objective was not to criticize, but to "educate, and instruct, it is hoped that it will serve a useful purpose, and be the means to correct and eliminate mistakes and errors in the employment of longshore labour."[61] But the employers were not prepared to consider strict rotation, nor were they impressed with Crombie's efforts to "educate" them. They warned him that a

[57] The 1930 and 1934 collective agreements stated that rotation dispatch may be the best way to equalize earnings but, "equality of service is not always obtainable, therefore rotation dispatching cannot be generally adopted and put into effect." CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 3, Collective Agreements. For an example of Federation's right of refusal in a subsidiary agreement see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 1, 2 Oct 1933. For companies reserving the right of superintendents to reject gangs and call for their preferred gangs see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 8.

[58] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-5, File 7, Crombie to Hall, 9 May 1935. A longshoreman from the company union era interviewed by William Pilcher claimed "The real employers, those that had the money, never saw us, did not know us and did not want to." Pilcher, *Portland Longshoremen,* p.42.

[59] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 4, Crombie to Keeley, 29 Aug. 1924.

[60] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 8, Crombie to Burns, 17 June 1929.

[61] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-4, File 8, Bulletin #1, 1930.

detailed report filled with employer violations of dispatch rules was a potentially damaging record that might be used against them in future arbitrations. They were never satisfied with Crombie's dispatch rules, or his efforts to improve efficiency by tinkering with the composition of the work force. Crombie was never able to establish the labour department as an independent management bureau with the power to create and enforce policy because the employers were simply unwilling to be governed by a man they considered an employee.

As Crombie dealt with the growing pains of managing a diverse employer group, longshoremen found themselves stuck in an oppressive work environment, with an unfair dispatch run by a labour bureau unable to govern the employer group, or deliver agreed upon hiring protocols. As the 1920s ended, it was these remnants of the ILA, replacement workers and new men forced into the VDWWA who were emerging as the most unified group on the Vancouver waterfront. As Jack Maurrey claimed "the employers organized the longshoremen. No question about it they were the best organizers we had."[62] Ironically the changes the employers implemented after 1923 were promoting solidarity among longshoremen, that solidarity is the subject of the next chapter.

[62] Kimeldorf, *Reds Or Rackets*, p.76.

Chapter 2.

The Longshoremen

> The conditions of boom and bust that determine the daily life of the world's ports have produced a labour jungle that few laymen have ever penetrated [1] R.B. Oram

Vancouver longshoremen have always demonstrated the impulse to organize. Between 1888 and 1912 when the ILA brought international affiliation to Vancouver, collective organizations ranging from the Knights of Labor to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) represented the city's longshoremen in sixteen strikes.[2] Following the 1923 strike the Federation hoped to eliminate this militant tendency in the reconstruction process.[3] However, the job continued to attract militant workers from other industries and men who could cope with intermittent work who had always gravitated to the docks. Forced into a company union, the efforts of those workers to adapt to the Federation's new administrative structures, and ultimately form a pragmatic, job oriented, rank and file union, are the subject of this chapter.

Like other port cities around the world, Vancouver had a waterfront community of bars, restaurants, and hotels where transient industrial workers congregated between jobs. In this environment they often mingled with longshoremen and three occupational

1 R.B. Oram, "Cargo Handling and the Modern Port" quoted in "On the Waterfront: Longshoring in Canada," in J. Foster, ed., *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada.* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1986) p.281.

2 Parnaby, *Citizen Docker*, p.9.

33 The Federation claimed that the boom and bust nature of shipping made the more casual members of the longshore work force susceptible to strikes, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-3 File 4. Reprint of an article titled "What is the Shipping Federation" probably 1927.

groups with a tradition of collective action frequently moved into work on the docks.[4] They were sailors, miners, and loggers, and they provided the VDWWA with a culture of solidarity from the union's inception.[5]

Sailors have long been subjected to harsher discipline than shore workers. From the era of press gangs when men were kidnapped into service, life aboard a ship was not a democracy. Isolated, far from the stability of government, in a strictly stratified and controlled class environment, industrial discipline was often maintained at the end of a whip.[6] By the twentieth century the whip had been retired, but the draconian employer attitude remained and when shipping companies along the west coast of North America became dock operators they shifted that attitude ashore. They assumed that the retired sailors who moved into longshore work required the discipline ashore that they had received at sea.[7] However, employers were not alone in bringing their industrial relations perspective ashore. Witnessing the worst of capitalism abroad while enduring the class

4 Many of these establisments advertised in the Longshore paper *Ship and Dock.* See *Ship and Dock*. 5 June 1935. One advertiser, the Princeton Hotel remains in 2011 and is still frequented by longshoremen.

5 On the Vancouver downtown east-side's restaurants, hotels, and, beer parlours as gathering places for resource workers in the first half of the twentieth century see Rolf Knight, *Along The No.20 Line: Reminiscences of the Vancouver Waterfront.* (Vancouver: New Star Books,1980) Rolf includes interviews with resource workers from the period and claims that the area was a "storm center" of industrial and political activity containing the headquarters of the IWW, the Lumber workers Industrial Union, the Workers Unity League and logging and longshore hiring centers in the first half of the twentieth century.

6 For the tradition of sailor militancy and harsh treatment see, Peter Linebaugh, and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, And The Hidden History Of The Revolutionary Atlantic.* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), and Bruce Nelson, *Workers On The Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, And Unionism In The 1930s.* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press,1990). The whip may have been retired but the class distinction and discipline sailors endured aboard ships was still much harsher than workers faced ashore. For example in 1937 captain Joseph Guinard of the *Algic* was instructed to bring seamen who had refused to work in sympathy with striking longshoremen in Uruguay back to the United States in irons to be prosecuted to the "full extent of the law" CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.520-F-1, File 3, United States Maritime Commission to Joseph Guinard of the *Algic*,10 Sept. 1937.

7 On the Shipping Federation's leadership role in anti-union activity among Vancouver's corporate community see, Andrew Yarmie, "The Right to Manage: Vancouver Employers' Associations, 1900-1923", *B.C. Studies 90* (1991), pp. 40-74, also Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* p. 11.

structure and discipline of life aboard a ship frequently gave sailors a cosmopolitan world view and class consciousness that they carried with them to the waterfront.[8]

Miners and loggers also experienced a class structured industrial environment in isolated logging camps and company towns where the social and economic gap between management and labour was more pronounced than in economically diverse communities. Working in a dangerous anti-union environment, frequently lodged in substandard company housing, and often forced by isolation to purchase over-priced goods in a company store miners and loggers developed a reputation for class consciousness and militancy.[9]

After 1923, the connection between longshoremen and these three occupational groups continued. Application records show sailors from British tramp steamers and coastwise vessels gravitated toward dock work. Men such as Vic Pollard, a quartermaster on the *Cassiar* used longshoring to supplement his work as a sailor. While other men like Sam Engler turned to longshoring once they grew tired of being at sea. Ex-sailors were so well represented on the Vancouver beach that longshoreman Bill Smith claimed when coastal vessels required shifting, longshoremen took the wheel and

[8] As early as 1886 sailors on the west coast of the U.S.A. were lobbying for rotation hiring, Nelson, *Waterfront Workers,* p.41. On sailors' tendency toward militancy and cosmopolitanism see Ibid. pp. 2,3. For the effects of this cosmopolitanism on longshoremen see Pilcher, *The Portland Longshoremen,* p.30.The Federation was aware of and monitored the connection between longshoremen and sailors; for example Canadian National Steamships provided Crombie with a list of seamen who they suspected of promoting an independent union among longshoremen see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-5, File 9.

[9] On the militancy of loggers and miners see, A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement 1899-1919.* (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1977), On the class stratification of company towns see, David Jay Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier: 1897-1919", *Canadian Historical Review,* LVlll,vol.2,(June 1977), pp.154-175, On the anti-unionism and violence associated with mining communities see Stephen Norwood, *Strikebreaking and Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth Century America,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). For an example in a Canadian context see Stephen Lyon Endicott, *Bienfait: The Saskatchewan Miner's Struggle of 31,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). On the solidarity and cosmopolitanism of sailors and loggers and their tendency to be recruited into longshore work on the Pacific Coast in the early part of the twentieth century, see Kimeldorf, *Reds or Rackets.* p.20,21.

moved the ship to avoid disturbing the crew.[10] Sailors and longshoremen held mass meetings together to discuss political and job issues. At these meetings, on the job, or at the dispatch hall, men like Pollard and Engler mingled with ex-miners such as WW I Victoria Cross winner Mickey O'Roarke, 1935 strike leader Oscar Salonen and former loggers such as M.D. Rogers.[11]

Veterans also flooded to the waterfront in the post 1923 organization process. Application records reveal requests from captains, colonels, and various other regimental representatives recommending ex-soldiers for waterfront employment. Other ex-soldiers for example Joseph Gillies applied for work through veteran's groups such as the Great War Veterans Association of Canada.[12] A returned World War I veteran himself, Crombie tended to hire ex-soldiers. However, the Federation was dominated by former officers, while the men who applied for longshore work were predominately enlisted men.[13] Any men who expected camaraderie from the former officers who commanded them in the trenches were quickly disappointed. The Federation's officer class expected a military culture of obedience. One returned veteran claimed "officers who had four years military training, an occasional one in action, returned to carry on in industry as they had learned in war to treat men as automatons."[14] But the employers were also disappointed, as far from being compliant "automatons," men returned from

10 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-4, File 5, Application Records. *Man Along The Shore,* pp.57, 53,54, 101.

11 Michael Kevin Dooley, "Our Mickey: The Story of Private James O'Rourke, VC.MM (CEF), 1879-1957", *Labour/Le Travail.* No.47, (Spring 2001). For more on Oscar Solonen see Parnaby, *Citizen Docker.* pp.120,121. Crombie assigned Pratt securities to investigate Rogers as a suspected member of the IWW. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 2, Pratt Security to Crombie, 2 May 1928. For shared meetings of longshoremen, loggers and lumber handlers see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-F-7, File 5.

12 CVA, Add. MSS 279, 520-G-4, File 5, Great War Veterans Association to Crombie, 12 May 1926. Other Associations included, The Returned Soldiers Club of Vancouver and the Citizen's Committee for the Re-establishment of Handicapped Soldiers, see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-4, File 5.

13 While Crombie received requests to hire veterans for longshore work. He also received requests for work within the Federation from discharged military officers. For example former captain Geo Sumner who had been a battalion accountant overseas during the war was recommended for employment by Crombie to Federation President Kealey, .CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 4, Crombie to Kealey, 6 Oct. 1924.

14 *The Heavy Lift.* Undated edition.

the war with a sense of entitlement. After years in the trenches they were not prepared to be mistreated without protest. Subjected to injustice they appealed to ex-servicemen's associations or former regimental commanders who wrote Crombie to lobby on their behalf.[15] They quickly found common ground with the militancy of loggers, sailors, and miners and often assumed leadership roles in the VDWWA.[16]

Many VDWWA men were members of, or sympathetic to the IWW.[17] By the 1920s many dock workers had cast aside the revolutionary aspects of the IWW. However as Bruce Nelson claimed the influence of syndicalism outlasted the organizations that represented it on North America's docks, where longshoremen retained the organization's job centred approach to resistance, aversion to bureaucratic leadership, and focus on direct action.[18] An IWW local had represented longshoremen in Vancouver until it amalgamated with the ILA in 1912. Crombie attempted to identify and dismiss individual IWW members within the work force, but in 1925 he reported to the Federation that were at least one hundred and fifty IWW sympathisers remaining from amalgamation in the VDDWA, and there was little he could do to curb their influence.[19] That same year he received a report that ex-ILA and VDWWA men were prominent at an IWW meeting where extra chairs had to be brought into seat well over 500 men. Only two years into the Federation's re-organization program aimed at eliminating solidarity, many men in the combined work force of ex-ILA men, sailors, miners, Wobblies, and replacement workers that made up the VDWWA were at least ready listen to advocates of a more militant form of representation.[20] With many men in the VDWWA possessing a history of or a predisposition toward solidarity a number of factors involving the Federation's work practices and administrative structures further promoted a sense of community and collective action among longshoremen.

15 For examples see CVA, Add.MSS 279, 520-G-4, File 5.

16 For example, Ivan Emery VDWWA President during the 1935 strike was a WWI veteran.

17 Men such as Ed Long who was involved in the 1923 and 1935 strikes. *Man Along The Shore!,* p.33.

18 On IWW amalgamation in Vancouver see *Man Along The Shore!* p.46. On the influence of the IWW on North American docks see Nelson, *Waterfront Workers,* pp. 53, 62.

19 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 2, Crombie to F.W. Peters, CPR, 27 Jan. 1925.

20 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 2, CPR to Crombie, 13 Jan. 1925.

Once longshoremen were back on the job the traditional nature of longshore work produced a sense of camaraderie that the employers were unable to eliminate. While technologies such as winches and jitneys were beginning to change the method of cargo delivery to the dock apron or ship, once the cargo reached the bottom of the ship's hold longshore work remained labour intensive. Prior to the era of containerization, cargo in the hold of a ship or in a dock side warehouse was stowed by hand.[21] The stowage of commodities such as barrels, timber, rubber, or sacks, frequently required the teamwork of two or more men. Longshoreman and writer Stan Weir claimed that working all day with a partner on the other end of a timber or heavy sack quickly gave a man the measure of his partner's worth as a worker. During the course of the day with up to seventeen men working in a hold, a longshoreman shared the burden of a load with several partners providing ample opportunity to gauge the capabilities every man in the hatch. The teamwork required to do the heavy physical work in an oppressive and often dangerous work environment promoted a feeling of solidarity, camaraderie, and esprit de corps among longshoremen. Weir called these historical longshore partnerships a "unique social institution" that has been threatened by the growth of containerization. He claimed that when working alone in massive container moving machinery, pressure to produce comes solely from the employers in the form of expected production numbers, whereas in the hand stow era, partners created social pressure to produce.[22] He claimed that while working general cargo a man wanted to demonstrate some "class" to the men he was working with. He wanted to feel a sense of belonging and solidarity with the rest of the men on the job. That sense of solidarity and collective spirit extended to longshoremen around the world. Discarded newspapers, forgotten cargo hooks, clothing, food, or empty bottles from secret parties gave the men a connection to longshoremen in other ports. They knew the cargo they were about to

[21] Much work was still done by the hand stow method in Vancouver until the mid-1980s when a clause mandating that containers with cargo for more than one consignee were to be discharged by longshoremen was removed. For a description by a working longshoreman of the teamwork needed to bring a single load to rest at the bottom of the hatch in the company union era see Gilbert Mers, *Working the Waterfront: The Ups and Downs of a Rebel Longshoreman.* (Austin: University of Texas Press,1988) pp.6,7.

[22] Weir, *Singlejack Solidarity, p.73.* For more on the importance of partners and solidarity building *see* Wellman, *Union Makes Us strong,* p.141, 142.

sweat over had been “sweated” in similar conditions by longshoremen from across the globe.[23] William Pilcher echoed Weir’s comments concerning the connection between hard work and camaraderie in the hand stow era. He claimed that it was a camaraderie that included a “devil may care attitude” and a linguistic repertoire that featured a penchant for on the job profanity and the use of nicknames. He claimed that while the nick names were usually derogatory and descriptive of the individual’s physiognomy such as “Bignose,” or of a distinguishing activity such as “Burglar,” “Cesspool,” or “Professor,” they were seldom given to men who were not well liked. He claimed they were used only by fellow longshoremen and on Portland’s waterfront were often good naturedly exchanged along with a barrage of insults and profanity to re-affirm a sense of community and solidarity prior to a hard day of dangerous physical work.[24] No record remains describing such a pre-job solidarity ritual among Vancouver longshoremen during the company union era. However in 1975 when longshoremen sat down to describe their company union experiences for *Man Along The Shore!*, some remembered the hard work, others spoke of the poor conditions, but almost all of them recalled a sense of on the job camaraderie. Ed Nahanee claimed “the guys were all characters on the beach. They all fitted into a picture of fun. It made a real nice lively day. When you went home you went feeling good. The next morning you were all there again. That was the spirit in those days.”[25] Bill Smith recalled nicknames such as “Ding Dong Smith “ who had been a streetcar conductor, “Radar,” who only had one eye, and “Brewery Bill” who lived across the street from the Vancouver brewery.[26]Paddy McDonagh claimed there “was a bond between the old timers” and Watson Jones remembered his partners as “a great bunch hard workers and always ready to lend a hand” who had “spent many years doing the hard work [in the ship’s hatch] down below.”[27]

23 Weir, *Singlejack Solidarity*, p.92.
24 Pilcher, *The Portland Longshoremen,* pp.11,102-107.
25 *Man Along The Shore!,* p.56.
26 Ibid., p.141.
27 Ibid., pp.142,148.

This sense of solidarity was heightened by the employers' drive for efficiency and their cavalier attitude toward safety. In the eleven ILA years between 1912 and 1923, eight men were killed on the Vancouver waterfront. In the first three years of company unionism 19 men were killed and by 1934, 60 men had lost their lives in a work regime where efficiency simply meant more, faster, and safety was largely ignored.[28] Without an established local standard of equipment safety, foreign flag ships from countries with varying standards of safety entered the port in disrepair. Loads were hoisted that winch motors could handle but were beyond the capacity of the boom to lift. Veteran longshoreman Harry Walters claimed, "Ships would come in and the gear would be rotten. The shackles, the blocks, and the runners would all be rusty. They would never change the gear. They would just carry on until something happened. I remember we went on one ship and two booms came down after we started… they sent for the shipyard men and they came across and the whole boom was just full of dry rot."[29] Speed ups and job technique contributed to injuries. For example, no attempts were made to prevent back injuries. Longshoreman Harry Walters claimed "sacks were dumped in the open square of the hatch and men picked them up from ground level all day."[30] In 1926 forty-five accidents in a six month period were attributed substandard gear. In the same year, the Federation's President reported that 31% of accidents were due to faulty equipment or supervisor error.[31] Nevertheless many employers did not attend Federation safety meetings, insisting that safety policy focus on the mistakes of longshoremen.[32] Outside the boardroom, they claimed that most injuries were caused by employee negligence and they "would penalize men who through their own carelessness have become injured."[33] To keep the focus of blame on the work-force, they maintained a campaign of posters and newsletters emphasizing the need for improved vigilance by

[28] The first figure is from CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-3, File 6, ILA bulletin,1926. The second figure is from, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5, Dept. of Labour Report,1936. or the Vancouver and District Waterfront Workers Association, *Ship and Dock.* April 5 1935.

[29] *Man Along The Shore!,* p.69.

[30] Ibid.

[31] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 5, President's Report, 1926.

[32] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 5, Irons to Crombie, 4 Aug. 1926.

[33] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Box 55 File #2, quoted in Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* p.71.

longshoremen to prevent injury. The employers' propaganda never addressed problems with sub-standard equipment, speed ups, and the drive for efficiency. Longshoremen grew tired of being blamed for accidents and in an act of quiet solidarity refused to attend company sponsored safety seminars where their performance was criticized.[34]

Centralized hiring supervised by the Federation also created an opportunity for increased socialization and solidarity between the 700 to 900 longshoremen. Men in the revamped work force were not always attached to one dock or employer. Through centralized hiring they serviced all the city's docks, widening their exposure to different foremen, partners, and employers. Dismissals, sickness, specialty commodities, absence, foreman selection, and fill-ins by surplus men increased the number of men that a longshoremen worked with. Men the Federation deemed productive were placed into gangs, where they gained a sense of solidarity with fellow gang members. But gang membership did not isolate them from the rest of the workforce. Depending upon the commodity, surplus men from the hall were required to buttress basic gangs. Former gang members relegated to surplus work through re-classification were a constant reminder that company favour was tenuous. Ex-partners and relatives were often surplus men rotating into different jobs and gangs on a weekly or daily basis. During peak periods, scratch gangs were assembled employing surplus men, further expanding the range of a longshoreman's working relationships.[35] When commodity gangs for logs or lumber were created, their classification did not isolate them, for ships frequently carried more than a single commodity. For example, on a single vessel, a log gang might work the hold next to a general cargo gang or lumber gang, providing one commodity group an opportunity to appreciate the skills of the other. Fill-in skill opportunities such as winch driving temporarily took men who worked down in the ship's hold to work with different men and gangs. Working outside their usual designation on deck winches instead of below in the hold further expanded the number of men they worked with, and

[34] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Box 3 File 2, Cited in Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* p.69.

[35] Scratch gangs were assembled at the hall during peak periods. They were made up of skilled men taken out of other gangs or from various skill boards (manning lists) at the hall. For instance a labourer working below in a ship's hatch could be moved to drive winch in a scratch gang. *Man Along The Shore!,* p.61.

gave them the opportunity to appreciate the job from a completely different perspective.[36] This movement of men, between skilled and unskilled jobs, between the hold of a ship to the deck, and between ship and dock jobs, prevented craft chauvinism and gave the VDWWA a cross-craft industrial union consciousness and solidarity.[37] Unlike factory work that isolated a worker at a single station, or jobs that were restricted to one geographical location and employer, the wide range of longshore working relationships produced a workforce of men who had some experience at a wide range of longshore work and had probably worked with, or at least had some knowledge of every longshoreman and employer on the beach. Old timer Fred Macdonald claimed "before the 35 strike I think I could name everybody on the waterfront. I think that they had more pride in their work. After they had finished a job they would go to the beer parlour and they would load the ship all over again and boast about what they had done"[38] The result was a unique level of solidarity and cosmopolitanism within the permanent longshore community.

This wide range of acquaintance and shared experience was enhanced by time spent waiting for a job at the hall. Centralized dispatch at the Federation hall was designed to eliminate the corruption and bribery that plagued dock-side shape-ups.[39] Opened at an embossed invitation event on June 23 1927, the Federation boasted they had "built a commodious and comfortable hall and all their actions were in fine spirit

[36] For men working outside their usual designation see CVA Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-1, File 2, For the development of a skill rating system for peak loads see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Crombie to Walker, 21 Jan 1935.

[37] These fill-ins sometimes made up as much as 25% of the gangs working. For examples see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-6, Files 3, 4.

[38] *Man Along the Shore!,* p.142. For a further discussion on the wide range of socialization among longshoremen see Pilcher, *Portland Longshoremen,* pp. 114-116.

[39] On Dockside shape-ups and their corruption in Vancouver see *Man Along The Shore!*, pp.34,35,51,61,62. Shape up corruption was a problem in American ports in the company union years. For bribes of alcohol, money, and loan sharking associated with the shape-up.see Pilcher, *Portland Longshoremen,* pp. 32,33. On the "dangerous and brutal speed-up" associated with the shape-up see Wellman, *Union Makes Us Strong,* p.60. On government recognition of corruption associated with the shape-up see Kimeldorf, *Reds Or Rackets,* p. 41.

toward longshoremen and their safety."[40] The new facility contained a barbershop, restaurant, news room, pool tables, and shower facilities. The Federation hoped the amenities would keep men sober and available at the hall, preventing a "beer parlour dispatch" that forced dispatchers to find men in local speakeasies, bars, and restaurants.[41] However, their efforts ironically provided a further opportunity for socialization and potential solidarity within the longshore community. Longshoreman Alex Will claimed, "We spent a great deal of time outside, [the hall] where the Empire Stevedoring building is now. It was an empty lot then. Many hours in the summer were spent playing horseshoes."[42] Longshoremen also worked long hours, rode the bus together, or shared a ride at odd hours to the job. Many men spent more time in the company of longshoremen than they did with their families. Dispatches were held six times a day, forcing men to linger at the hall all day to avoid missing a job.[43] Centralized hiring at the hall added long hours waiting for a job to the list of things that bound the men to each other and the port side community[44].

[40] CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-3, File 4, opening announcement. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517- G-3, File 4, Reprint of a *Harbour and Shipping* Article, or CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-3, File 4.List of amenities at CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-3, File 4, amenities included a foreman's room, kitchen, and Crombie's office.

[41] Ibid.

[42] The empty lot was across the street from the dispatch hall. *Man Along The Shore,* p.62.

[43] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.521-A-3, File 6, Work schedule and conditions, 26 March 1923.

[44] Seymour Martin Lipset argued that isolation, for example in logging camps or mining communities in class stratified environments promoted radicalism. Seymour Martin Lipset, "*Political Man": The Social Bases of Politics.* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). pp.243-247. In *Reds or Rackets* Kimeldorf claimed that isolation did not necessarily make waterfront workers radical . He claims that San Pedro longshoremen were more isolated from the community than San Francisco men, yet San Pedro's longshoremen were far more conservative than those in San Francisco. However the example is based on geographical isolation. He notes that while San Pedro men were not radical they displayed a militant solidarity regarding job protection. Pilcher, *Portland Longshoremen,* pp.22,23. and Vancouver longshoremen *Man Along The Shore! pp.56,118,142*) discuss the isolation created by the multiple daily dispatch times, waiting for a job, or long hours spent together on the job that bound them together creating a sense of camaraderie. What is important for this paper is that whether the isolation was geographical or a by-product of administrative factors that bound longshoremen to the port, longshoremen in each city spent a great deal of time in the company of other longshoremen, thus enhancing a sense of community, camaraderie, and solidarity.

The hall also became a focal point for potential discontent and protest. At the hall, the composition of the work force for the day was established through a series of increasingly complicated dispatch rules. Once they were on the job men varied in their level of militancy. Their knowledge of safety, dispatch rules, the collective agreement, and the attitude they brought from the dispatch were factors that determined the level of solidarity and resistance employers dealt with on any given day. This unpredictability was increased by what the men may have seen or heard at the hall prior to the job. Conducted at a dock entrance, or at the side of a ship, the inequality, bribery, and favouritism of a shape-up were only witnessed by the men at the scene. Centralized dispatch placed injustices and breaches of agreed-upon dispatch rules on display for the entire waterfront workforce, just prior to arriving at the job site.[45] Incidents such as a Blue Funnel foreman hiring men at the hall without consulting the Federation's surplus list, ten men fired for not having gloves after working an entire day out in the stream in the harbour without lunch, or the dismissal of A. Mcfado who returned to work after broken finger, worked a heavy job on fish, and was then suspended for breaking down on the job, would become common knowledge at the hall.[46] In a letter to Crombie signed "Battery 68" a former soldier complained that the janitor was dispatching men in the basement as he saw fit. He claimed that he had not had a job for two weeks while a man just in from Regina got two in one day.[47] In his interview for *Man Along The Shore,* longshoreman Alex Will's narrative carries a tone of indignation thirty years after the incident when he describes the abusive manner in which some company representatives revelled in their power at the hall.

> This particular side runner had the habit of clicking these chips up and down in his hands and swinging on one foot and looking as important as he could making every second of his importance last. He would very often

[45] For more on the importance of the dispatch as a public event see Wellman, *Union Makes Us Strong,* p.74 and Pilcher, *Portland Longshoremen,* p.64.

[46] The Blue Funnel incident see CVA Add. Mss 279, Loc. 517-F-6, File 2, Crombie to John Mcleod, Harbour Commissionaires, July 1927. For the ten men fired see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-4 File 5, James Stott to Shipping Federation, 2 Feb. 1924, For the McFado incident see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Add. MSS Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, VDWWA to Crombie, undated.

[47] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc 520-D-1, File 11, 68 Battery to Crombie, 20 Nov. 1932.

> slowly reach to give what a man thought was going to be a chip,[job token] the man would put his hand out to receive this chip but the side runner would slip it right over his shoulder to the man behind.[48]

On display for the entire work force at the hall to see, irregularities and injustices such as these may have been carried from the hall to the job to influence the development of solidarity that day. The daily dispatch insured that solidarity and resistance were never static; they were a constantly developing process established first at the hall and then on the job.[49]

The Federation was aware of the hall's potential as a centre of discontent and quickly moved to prevent it. Leases for the facilities within the building stated, "You will maintain and operate the restaurant, barbershop, news stand, and services to our satisfaction and you will not allow meetings, speech making, or the like on the premises."[50] To limit the opportunities for socialization they replaced the basement pool tables with a casual dispatch area. Deprived of the opportunity to congregate and speak freely longshoremen simply went elsewhere. The news stand and restaurant changed ownership a number of times until the Federation closed them permanently. Far from the "commodious" environment the Federation had proclaimed, the hall became the structural symbol of employer disloyalty, where the inequality of industrial relations was made apparent on a daily basis.

Solidarity became resistance in a number of ways. One of the most frequent was simply not showing up at the hall for work. Without a guarantee of a job men often elected to stay home. It was a level of independence that the Federation found intolerable and they frequently removed men from the surplus work list for not making themselves available for work despite Crombie's warning that, "job jumping, picking jobs, and refusing to go to work except for good cause is to be severely censured and

48 *Man Along the Shore*, p.62.

49 For a description by a longshoreman of daily job issues circulating throughout the waterfront social network and becoming the major arena of conflict between longshoremen and their employers see Mers, *Working the Waterfront.* particularly chapter 3, pp.60-88.

50 CVA, Add. Mss 279, Loc. 520-E-4, File 3 Lease Agreement between the B.C. Shipping Federation and Canadian Railway news Ltd., 1927.

disciplined by the joint committee"[51] Other resistance was covert, such as tampering with hot water heating valves to flood the dispatch building.[52] Resistance could be passive and spontaneous, such as closing ranks in silence so the Federation could not find a single witness when the dispatch clock was stolen from a crowded hall.[53] Other resistance was spontaneous and pro-active. Alex Will remembers a foreman who was uncomfortable distributing job chips. Unable to choose who would work and who would not, he simply threw the chips in the air in a crowded hall. Will stopped the resultant mad scramble by shouting "Boys, for Christ sake let us stop. Let us try to retain a little human dignity here." In an act of spontaneous solidarity the men ceased the fight, threw the chips on the floor, and forced the siderunner to distribute them to the first 24 men in line.[54] In an environment where dismissal could be swift for the slightest offense, some men took the dangerous step of writing directly to Crombie to express outrage or protest. Confident men such as F. Blumberg challenged the Federation with a demonstration of knowledge they knew the superintendents and the Federation bureaucrats could not match. Used by the Federation to express any form of dissatisfaction, charges of "inefficiency" were often vague. In a letter reacting to such a charge levelled at his gang, Blumberg claimed "the gang had to wait to 8:40 to rig the gear then shift two lumber scows. Then re-rig the gear before loading logs then putting on the top beam and hatch lids in 3 hours."[55] Blumberg's letter reveals the level of skill required to adapt to changing cargo and conditions. Moreover, he also fearlessly challenges the employers to match his expertise, to be specific about their complaint, and not hide behind a vague charge of inefficiency.

Most resistance was channelled through the VDWWA and the joint committee structures established by the Federation. The union frustrated the Federation by refusing to simply rubber stamp dismissal lists, sending them back to the employers for further

[51] CVA Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-5, File 9, Federation memo probably 1930.

[52] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 20, Crombie to J. Stuart, Secretary Orange Hall, 21 Jan. 1926.

[53] Cva, Add. MSS 279, 521-A-5, File 4, W. Hill to Crombie, 6 Dec, 1935.

[54] *Man Along The Shore!,* p.62.

[55] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-1, File 7, F. Blumberg to Crombie, 30 Dec. 1926.

consideration. They protested the membership of men they regarded as mere labour spies.[56] They protested corruption in hiring and demanded the autonomy to select their own members.[57] In one case they complained that a man was given a union card because he owed a Federation official one hundred dollars, questioning whether the union was to become a method whereby a company official could "use this association to collect his bad debts." [58]

In a multi-employer work place, without the connections that exist between employer and employees on other jobs, dispatch rules and the collective agreement became extremely important as the primary arena of dialogue between longshoremen and their employers.[59] Rank and file longshoremen looked to the language in these documents for stability in an otherwise chaotic industrial environment.[60] Union members became knowledgeable guardians of the collective agreement, reporting on the job contract and dispatch breaches to a responsive union leadership.

That leadership was far from the detached bureaucracy the Federation had hoped for, they were working longshoremen, not professional labour politicians as annual elections made them responsive to their membership and rank and files issues were their issues. During the ILA era in Vancouver the Federation maintained that the union was dominated by a radical clique headed by prominent Marxists Jack Kavanaugh and William Pritchard.[61] To prevent such a clique from gaining and keeping control of the

.[56] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, VDWWA to Crombie, 19 Feb 1924.

[57] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, VDWWA to Crombie, 19 Feb. 1924.

[58] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-5, File 7, R.H. Conway to Shipping Federation, 19 Jan. 1924.

[59] For the lack of attachment longshoremen feel toward the employers, see Pilcher, *Portland Longshoremen,* p.23. On the importance of the contract see Wellman, *Union Makes Us Strong,* p.47 David Wellman claims that on the waterfront class conflict is not "eliminated by contractual agreements. The conflict is relocated and is waged within the confines of the contract." On the daily job disputes see Wellman, *Union Makes Us Strong,* p.241.

[60] Charles Larrowe claimed that centralized dispatch, the casual nature of the job, and the dis-connect and distrust between longshoremen and employers created a "system of industrial jurisprudence which codified industry practices down to the most minute detail." Larrowe, *Shape-up and Hiring Hall,*p.83.

[61] Parnaby, *Citizen Docker.* p.9.

VDWWA the Federation insisted that yearly officer elections be written into the VDWWA constitution. However, their fear of radicalism and their insistence on regular elections to obtain a union leadership they found palatable came back to haunt them. Regular elections ensured a democratic, responsive leadership answerable to the rank and file. They insured that many rank and file men became executive members, union officials, astute negotiators, and the type of effective trade unionists the union would require in the post company union period. When they quit or were voted out of office they brought their experience, knowledge, and, militancy back to the job. These union representatives insisted on introducing rank and file job issues, such as Canadian Freight's reluctance to pay the overtime mandated by the collective agreement at joint committee meetings, frustrating Crombie and the employers who hoped to restrict committee agendas to production issues, dismissals, or innocuous subjects such as company picnics and sports.[62] Despite the Federation's opposition, the VDWWA consistently attempted to increase their influence in the hiring process. Contractually forbidden to strike and operating within the confines of the company union's constitution, the VDWWA was nonetheless able to negotiate job rotation for some skilled jobs such as surplus topside and for spare board men.[63] These efforts continued in the 1930's when in order to distribute gang work more evenly they obtained rotation dispatch for gangs on a commodity basis. However the Federation never agreed to the union's ultimate goal of strict rotation hiring. Strict rotation meant equalization of earnings and the next job went to the next man on the rotation list regardless of his productive output. With the next day's work guaranteed longshoremen could slow the job down and gain control of the production process. The limited rotation system that the employers established allowed them to push production requirements to the limits of human endurance. With the next

[62] By the third decade of the twentieth century 25% of all industrial workers were in company unions and subjected to these committees where the employer controlled the agenda and only production or innocuous issues were discussed. See, Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p. 32. For the Federation chastising the VDWWA regarding joint committees see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-5, File 9, Federation memo on interference with management and joint committees, On Crombie directing VDWWA regarding appropriate committee issues see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Crombie to VDWWA, 28 Feb. 1924 or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Crombie to VDWWA, 6 April 1924.

[63] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 1, Crombie to VDWWA, 2 Oct. 1933. or CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7, File 12.

day's job contingent upon employer patronage, the union's capacity to curb speed-ups was limited. The Federation consequently insisted that any gains the union was able to make regarding work distribution were hampered by the employers' right to reject men based on efficiency.[64] They insisted that efficiency clauses remain in the contract to trump any subsidiary agreements.[65] Without penalties for violations of dispatch rules, competing employers in a shrinking economy regularly "chiseled" on agreements. The resultant legion of written complaints by the union improved the leadership's abilities in the committee process, but they did not stop the violations.[66]

Despite the union's limited success as the 1920s ended, the waterfront workforce that confronted the B.C. Shipping Federation was not the one they envisioned after the strike of 1923. As conceived by the employers, regular employment would give efficient longshoremen a stake in the community and their work. The Federation hoped that the VDWWA leadership representing almost a thousand men spread over a multi-employer workplace would become bureaucratized and distanced from the daily complaints of the rank and file. They hoped that they would act as a disciplinary organ and dispenser of employer information. However, a number of factors had produced a far different union. First, the intermittent nature of the work, speed ups, lack of safety, and capricious dismissals made longshoremen realize the employers could not be counted on for stability or loyalty. Second, due to socialization at the hall and on the job longshoremen eventually either worked with, or came in contact with almost every other longshoreman on the waterfront. The job thus produced a shared experience, a wide circle of familiarity, and mutual respect that left longshoremen looking to each other for loyalty and solidarity. Third, selling their labour as individuals every day to a group of competing employers who felt no connection to them made longshoremen realize that

64 For example Crombie agreed to allow rotation for surplus men but like all letters of agreement he included that the agreement does not "officially surrender employer's right to pick men they elect to hire" CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 1, Crombie to VDWWA Secretary, 9 June 1933.

65 Dispatch agreements specified penalties upon the union for violations but not the employers see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 10, Dispatch agreement 1934.

66 On the professionalization of union leadership during the open shop period see Montgomery, *Worker Control,* p.63. For examples of union protests concerning contract breaches and unequal distribution of work. See CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 8.

collective action, rotation dispatch, and policing of the collective agreement were the only way to bring order to a chaotic daily hiring process. Finally the annual election of rank and file men to leadership positions within the VDWWA insured that longshoremen and their leadership were united in opposition to the Federation. With economic catastrophe on the horizon the Federation faced a union with a growing culture of solidarity in permanent confrontation over the "no man's land" of the collective agreement and dispatch.[67]

[67] Crombie warned the employers that centralized dispatch had caused the employers to lose touch with the men, see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-5, File 7, Crombie to J.E. Hall, 9 May 1935. For a summary of the improved working conditions due to solidarity see *Heavy Lift* 12 October, 1934.

Chapter 3.

The Aggressive Federation: Solidarity under Attack

> When after ten years of continuous effort a union having some small protective effectiveness is found and when several of these unions band together for mutual help and protection the employers go berserk in their efforts to smash these organizations, it is time to see what these organizations want.[1] LWTWC Bulletin 1935

The 1920s were a period of adjustment for both the VDWWA and the Shipping Federation as the union developed a sense of solidarity, and the Federation struggled to cope with the demands of a diverse group of employers When the stock market crashed in 1929 the two sides faced each other over a series of familiar job related issues. The VDWWA was nearly seven years old and eager to increase wages, gain more autonomy, to shake off their status as a company union, and to assume a wider role in the labour community. The Federation's answer to this familiar wish list and the union's growing solidarity was intransigence. However when the depression deepened, intransigence became aggression as the Federation began to claw back the union's wages and limited autonomy. This aggressive stance and the union's unwillingness to capitulate produced a five year period of struggle that culminated in the Federation abandoning industrial relations to rely on propaganda, state power, corporate vigilantism, and political hyperbole, to initiate a strike and destroy the VDWW in 1935. The issues that precipitated that struggle and the strike that broke the union are the subject of this chapter.

[1] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-2, File 4, LWTWC Central Strike Committee Bulletin, 1935.

By 1933 VDWWA longshoremen were paid less than in 1923.[2] The Federation had rejected wage increases in 1926 and 1927. A third request in 1930 was denied with the impatient reply that upon "mature consideration" an increase could not be considered at this time.[3] Instead the employers declared the waterfront was woefully inefficient and a wage cut was in order. The paternalistic tone of their refusal left little doubt that they still considered the union the junior partner in waterfront relations. When a board of conciliation rejected a proposed pay cut in 1930, individual employers began to cut wages indirectly by refusing to pay the travel time to all docks mandated by the collective agreement.[4] They hired non-union longshoremen from Vancouver's north shore to avoid paying travel time to the north side of the harbour. They cut stand-by pay for late arriving vessels, and began to pay the lower stand-by rate during extended periods between loads without informing the men.[5] They refused to pay during periods of inclement weather or for shifting rail cars, calling these periods "suspended time."[6] They refused to pay agreed upon stand-by time when ships were late or shut down due to mechanical failure. When a ship failed to arrive they dismissed men without pay.[7] They short paid men by ordering them from the hall, putting them to work as they arrived, but starting the entire crew's pay only when the last man arrived.[8]

When deflation reduced the cost of living in Vancouver, the Federation implemented a clause in the collective agreement that permitted them to cut wages. The union protested that according to the same clause cost of living increases between 1924 and 1932 should have triggered a wage increase. However, the Federation argued the

2 The 1923 rate under the ILA was 80 cents per hour straight time $1.20 per hour overtime, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-3, File 6, 1923 Schedule of Wages and Conditions. By 1933 the Federation had cut wages to 75 cents an hour for ship work and 71 cents for dock work. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 7, Walker to Crombie, 6 March 1933.

3 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-1, File 8, Shipping Federation to VDWWA, 9 Jan. 1930.

4 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 8, Statement of VDWWA negotiation committee, 17 Jan. 1934.

5 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2 Walker to Crombie, 5 Feb. 1935, or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Walker to Crombie, 5 Feb. 1935.

6 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 7, VDWWA comparison of wages and conditions, 1924-1932, 17 March 1932.

7 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 4, Crombie to Captain Baird, 29 July 1935.

8 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 1, Crombie to all Companies, 7 Dec.1933.

cost increases were too small to warrant a wage hike despite the fact that the increases were larger than the decrease in costs that the Federation was basing their current wage cut on.[9] The effect of the cut was magnified by a steady reduction in available work. Gang earnings declined by 20% between 1928 and 1930, and the number of men ordered on a daily basis fell from 700 to 450 during the same time frame. By 1933 the number of gang orders cancelled due to lack of work reached 29%. The result was that many men were only working one, two, and sometimes no days per week.[10] Following a five cent pay cut in 1932 even conservative elements within the union felt the Federation was pushing too hard. At a general meeting of Shipping Federation members, Joe Boyes a union executive member, former business agent, future union president, and a longshoreman respected by Crombie as a leader of the union's conservative element, asserted, "travel time cut, stand by time cut, many men feel relief might be better."[11]

The Federation's solution to the wage issue was to reduce the work-force. They demanded a reduction from eight or nine hundred men to a complement of six to seven hundred.[12] Instead of a wage increase, the men who remained would be offered the opportunity to increase their earnings by working more hours at the lower rate of pay. The union admitted that a reduction in manning would increase work opportunity for the men that remained. However they rejected the reduction arguing that the workforce had already been trimmed by 250 men in the preceding four years and further cuts "would undermine the happiness of those who remain during the depression."[13] The union's

9 For cost of living decrease of 21% between 1929 and 1933 see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.521-F-2, File 8. and CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 7, VDWA comparison of longshore wages and conditions today with that of 1924.17 March 1932.

10 Gang earnings see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-1, File 2, cancellations CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517- G-7, File 7, The number of men ordered daily CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-4, File 8, Federation Bulletin on manning, 16 June 1931, The Federation reacted with a further pay cut in 1933, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-F-7, File 7, Walker to Crombie, 6 March 1933.

11 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 6, J. Boyes at a Shipping Federation meeting, 27 April 1932. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 6 Walker to Crombie, Union executive recommends acceptance of five cent pay reduction, 28 April 1932.

12 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517 –G-7, File 8, Open Letter #6, Shipping Federation to VDWWA, Dec. 1933.also see, *Ship and Dock,* Dec. 1934.

13 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.515-G-7, File 7, VDWWA circular, 11 March 1932.

anxiety over a reduction in manning was exacerbated by the situation south of the border, where a plan by American employers to introduce compulsory physical examinations and a forty-five year old age limit had been rejected by the union.[14] In Vancouver, where the work force was beginning to age, Major Crombie maintained that "longshoring as an industry allows no provision for taking care of men who have grown old at their work like other industries do, and there are no real easy jobs for has-beens."[15] Justifying a new round of employee evaluations he claimed, classification eliminated inefficient men, removed the "dead wood," "trimmed the fat," and made room for new men to take their place.[16] When the Federation retained a second doctor to review first extended, and then all disability claims prior to another round of classification reviews, VDWWA members feared an attempt at reducing union strength based on infirmity and age.[17] Longshoreman Doc Cope claimed the Federation would "work hell out of the men for 15 or 20 years, then through a strike which they would defeat, get rid of the older men and through strike breakers get a new bunch."[18] Classifications, performance reviews, and work force reductions were a consistent source of union anxiety after 1930, and their elimination became a union demand in 1935.

Tensions increased in September 1931 when VDWWA men refused to cross a picket line during a strike at Barnett Mills. The Federation reminded the union that work stoppages were only permitted for safety issues and the collective agreement could be cancelled if the men did not return to work. The union maintained they feared violence if

14 Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity*, p.34. When new manning cuts were proposed the VDWWA complained that the work force had already been trimmed by 250 men between 1928 and 1932. While they realized that the remaining men may benefit from increased work the union maintained that the membership opposed further cuts, asserting that the men were aware that a "fellow work man has to live and a further cut would undermine the happiness of those who remain during the depression" CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.517-G-6, File 7, VDWWA circular, 11 March 1932.

15 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-4, File 8, Report to Federation members, Oct.1930.

16 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7 File 7, Crombie to All Companies on "deadwood", 22 Aug 1932, or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520- F-5, File 1, on "Trimming the fat" see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc 521-C-2, File 11 Notes for President's Report, 3 Jan. 1933.

17 *Heavy Lift,* 23 March 1934.

18 *Man Along the Shore!,* p.88.

they crossed the picket line and thus claimed the stoppage was a safety issue.[19] Their assertion was confirmed by police reports that suggested "reds and radicals" on the fringes of the dispute could cause violence.[20] When the police promised an increased presence for protection, the Federation stepped up the pressure to cross the line and on December 19th longshoremen relented and returned to work.[21] There were other work stoppages and protests between 1931 and 1935; to support relief camp workers, for May Day, for mechanization issues, and in support of other unions, but to the Federation the Barnett incident signaled an increased level of belligerence within the union.[22] For the next four years the VDWWA insisted the dispute was a safety issue while Federation maintained that longshoremen and Barnett Mill workers had used safety to justify a sympathy strike. In the wake of the incident the Federation began to assert that the "reds and radicals" the police suggested were on the "fringes" of the Barnett dispute were beginning to influence the leadership of the VDWWA.

The Federation began to take a more aggressive stance on control over skilled jobs. Throughout the 1920s mechanization had been a contentious issue as both the union and the Federation attempted to maximize their control skilled jobs that heavily influenced production. The most contentious piece of equipment was the jitney, a tractor-style vehicle and forerunner of the fork lift, the jitney moved cargo around the dock and from the warehouse to the ship. In an environment where employers frequently pitted ship and dock gangs against each other in a company speed up, a jitney driver could be an effective tool in job action and a valuable source of on the job information. Unlike men in a ship's hatch or in a dock gang, jitney drivers were not always under direct

[19] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 4, VDWWA to President of the B.C. Shipping Federation, 3 Nov. 1931.

[20] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 4, Advisory Committee to Shipping Federation, 16 Dec. 1931.

[21] CVA, Add MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 4, Crombie to Walker, 19 Dec.1931.

[22] The VDWWA supported log handlers in April 1935, refusing to load the *SS Hartington, Silverton and The City of Vancouver* with hot cargo. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc 517-G-6, File 2, VDWWA to Crombie, 5 April 1935. The union reminded the Federation that a verbal agreement was made in 1931 that the VDWWA would not be asked to work hot cargo if they returned to work at Barnett Mills. CVA, Add. MSS 279, 520-F-1, File 2, Walker to Hall 3 may 1935.

supervision. Jitney operators could inform workers in both ship and dock gangs that the pressure to quicken the pace was coming from the employers, not their fellow workers. They could communicate plans for job action, relate information regarding an overly zealous supervisor, spread jokes and gossip, or disrupt production by slowing down beyond the sight of a foreman. A union jitney driver could be a valuable unifying, militant agent. Conversely a company jitney driver could maintain silence, increase speed, and be an unwitting or complicit force of division among workers. While other skilled jobs such as winch driving were gradually being brought under union jurisdiction, as the depression deepened the Federation assumed a no compromise position on the hiring of jitney operators. They maintained the hiring and working conditions of jitney drivers fell outside the collective agreement, and they were not prepared to surrender control over how operators were dispatched, and more importantly, who operated the equipment. The union consistently attempted to move union men into these positions or at least to have non-union drivers governed by the wage and hours of work clauses in the collective agreement.[23] Ballantyne and Terminal docks employed permanent non-union jitney drivers who frequently worked beyond the ten hour a day maximum prescribed by the collective agreement. When they began to work twenty-four hours during peak periods while union drivers sat idle, the long running dispute erupted into a work stoppage the Federation proclaimed illegal.[24] In combination with the daily systemic disputes over dispatch and rotation hiring, the Federation's new aggressive stance on these issues, widened the divide between the union and the Federation when the collective agreement expired at the end of 1933.

The union's proposals for the new collective agreement in 1934 were familiar to both parties. They wanted work dispatched to union members first, increased wages, equalization of pay for ship and dock work, union dispatching, a return of stand-by pay,

[23] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-3, File 7.

[24] For Drivers working over hours see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7 , Crombie to Burns 23, March 1935, *Ship and Dock.* March 1935, or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2 Walker to Hall, 3 May 1935, on the work stoppage see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc 517-G-7, File 2, Report of dispute between the VDWWA and Ballantyne Pier over non-union Jitney drivers, 25 March 1935. For more disputes over mechanized workers see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G=6, File 2.

overtime for Saturday and Sunday, and spare ship, dock, and wheat workers dispatched from a single list [board] for a more equitable distribution of work.[25] This collection of job-centered proposals did not present a new challenge to the hegemony of the Federation, as even the most contentious demand for union dispatching was a familiar request that had always been rejected out of hand.[26]

The employer's response was clearly influenced by the situation south of the border, where a resurgent ILA was taking a militant stance in contract negotiations, aggressively demanding a coast wide contract, and union control of the dispatch.[27] In the depths of the depression and with a possible strike looming in American ports, the Federation hyperbolically framed the VDWWA's familiar demands as a challenge to their authority and Canada's social order. At a board of directors meeting on January 10 1934 the Federation prepared their negotiation strategy. Responding to the union's demands, they were only prepared to concede to dispatching spare men from a single list [board]. They maintained their stand on wages, insisting an increase would only come through a reduction in men.[28] Most importantly they had no intention of surrendering any control over the dispatch.[29] As negotiations opened they prepared for a work stoppage by forming housing, victualizing, protection, transportation, labour, and finance committees to manage strikebreaking labour. They recommended riot insurance on Federation buildings, and formed a publicity committee to control information and circulate propaganda during a work stoppage.[30]

25 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 8, 1933 union negotiation proposals.

26 Efficiency clauses insuring that the Federation employed men of their choosing had been maintained in the 1930 collective agreement. A further clause (7a) obligated the union to dispense with inefficient men. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, file 3, Collective Agreement, 22 Nov. 1930.

27 Shwartz, *Solidarity Stories*.pp.9-31.

28 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.517-G-7, File 8, Minutes directors meeting, 10 Jan. 1934.

29 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 8, Open letter to Federation members, 1934.

30 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 8, Crombie to all Shipping Federation members, 10,11,13 Jan 1934. Once a strike began all vessels would pay a levy for security. For a schedule of payments see CVA Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, Federation Finance Committee to all importers and exporters, 13 June 1935.

Eleven years after branding the ILA a hotbed of "red" activism to break the1923 strike, the Federation returned to the familiar tactic of red baiting in its relationship with the VDWWA. During 1934 contract negotiations, detective agencies, city police, the RCMP and labour spies searched for communist influence in the union.[31] As private detective agencies became aware of the kind of information the Federation wanted, they shifted their focus away from the IWW and other unaffiliated dissidents and turned their attention to finding communist influence in the union. They reported on meetings of longshoremen at coffee shops, billiard rooms, pubs, and apartments as communist gatherings.[32] A local restaurant frequented by longshoremen was reported as a haven for reds and agitators and Pratt Security Services claimed they had a spy on the 1934 union negotiation committee.[33]

There is little doubt that Communists were present around Vancouver unions during the depression, and longshoremen may have been prepared to support a Communist who could win improved working conditions and wages despite his politics. However, as Harry Bridges, Communist Party member, and charter president of the ILWU claimed, longshoremen were traditionally interested in "pork chops," not politics. He added that most longshoremen had nothing against Communists as long as they were lashing out against speed-ups, poor wages, or blacklisting but when they began to promote ideology or the party the men lost interest.[34] Tacoma longshoreman Paddy Morris asserted that not only were longshoremen not interested in politics, the employers did not really believe their own political rhetoric. He argued that the employers used inflammatory terms such as radical and communist to divert attention away from real

31 On the quest to root out communism on the Vancouver Waterfront see Parnaby, *Citizen Docker* pp.147-150.

32 For a number of reports from private agencies see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 2. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-4, File 2, Pratt Security to Crombie, The Federation's relationship with Pratt security ended following the 1935 strike with an unpaid bill for $26.24, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 2, Pratt to Crombie.

33 Sandy's Billiard room and the World Hotel were also reported as centers for "red" element meetings, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 2. For the operative on the negotiation committee see CVA, Add. MSS 279 , Loc. 521-C-2, File 2, Pratt Security Ltd. To J.E. Hall, 30 Nov. 1935.

34 Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets,* p.83,84. For more on longshoremen's lack of revolutionary zeal see Nelson, *Waterfront Workers,* p.113.

waterfront issues. As he put it "it doesn't make any difference to the boss whether you are a radical or conservative. The main consideration and thing is are you trying to put your hand in his pocket and take some money out … Now boys don't think that the business man is worrying about the radical or the conservative element, for he is not. But when he sees a group of men getting together, he immediately thinks they want to take some of his dough away from him. That is why we are here, to get some of his dough."[35] On the east coast Philadelphia longshoremen made it clear to Wobblies and Communists that their mission was job control, claiming, "We have no time to split hairs over abstract ideological questions."[36] Vancouver's longshoremen appear to have been similar to dock workers elsewhere; their demands were rooted in job issues not politics or ideology. The Federation's spies never uncovered any substantial rank and file support for communism among Vancouver longshoremen. In fact Communist activists on the waterfront reported that gaining support among rank and file longshoremen was difficult, and Pratt security's operative #3 claimed that most of the men "were dead set against the Reds."[37] Nevertheless the Federation was determined to deflect negotiations away from job issues and they would not let these facts influence their negotiation posture or their hyperbolic anti-communist propaganda that had always served them so well.

When contract talks opened in 1934, the Federation brought their aggressive stance to the negotiating table. In a particularly contentious session, talks bogged down over a BC Electric circular sponsored by the Workers Unity League, (WUL) an affiliate of the Communist party. The Federation demanded that the union committee disavow the circular and the WUL. The demand put the VDWWA negotiators in an awkward position, disavowing the WUL would appear as capitulation and cement the union's appearance as a company union. A refusal to sign would allow the Federation to assert that the

35 Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity,* pp.70,71.

36 Kimeldorf, *Reds or Rackets,* p.47.

37 For communist reports see Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* pp.108-142. For Operative #3 report see CVA Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File operative #3 to Shipping Federation, 20 Oct 1934. For more on longshoremen's tendency to be practical supporters of bread and butter job issues see Kimeldorf, *Reds Or Rackets,* pp. 162-165. On their tendency to support Bridges despite his left wing politics see Kimeldorf, *Reds Or Rackets,* p.6.

union was under the influence of the communist affiliated WUL. Union negotiators Ivan Emery, Oscar Solonen, George Brown, and James Greer refused to criticize a fellow workers' organization. Emery argued that the negotiating committee did not have the mandate to reject the WUL on behalf of the 1000 men in the VDWWA. He did not know if the men supported the WUL, did not think it was important, and rejected the issue as a complete waste of time.[38] A frustrated Oscar Salonen complained "we came to negotiate an agreement and the Federation keeps hammering on the WUL." He added that most of the men probably did not know anything about the WUL, but by forcing the negotiation team to make a statement about it the Federation would certainly bring it to their attention.[39] George Brown echoed Salonen's impatience, asserting that after two and one half months there had been only ten minutes' work done. He protested, "Now there is another red herring…I probably have just as much objection to the Salvation Army as the Workers Unity League but that does not say it is not doing good work…If you gentlemen [Federation negotiators] are really sincere tell us what you have in the way of negotiations so that we can take it back to the general body."[40] However, the Federation refused to relent and refused to let negotiations move forward. To get negotiations started the union men eventually compromised and signed a document stating that the VDWWA was not affiliated with the WUL. Disgusted with the absurdity of the situation, James Greer sarcastically asked "is there any other organization which we should state we are not in affiliation or sympathy with so that we can include them at the same time?"[41]

While the Federation continued to hammer away about communists, negotiations continued without resolution for months before a board of conciliation was struck to mediate the contract. In its list of long-standing issues the union asserted that the corrupt Federation dispatch hired non-union men while union members sat idle. They complained that union men were dispatched to jobs of shorter duration while non-members were given longer jobs. They claimed the dispatch was used to promote

38 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-7, File 8, Negotiation minutes, 15 Jan. 1934.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.

speed-ups and competition between gangs, to smother efforts to enforce wage rates, and to break or side-step work rules. In a majority position written by J.E. Hall for the Federation and Justice H. Robertson for the Department of Labour, the conciliation committee rejected the union's claims.[42] In July 1934 while negotiations were ongoing the Federation chartered a new company union the Canadian Waterfront Workers Association (CWWA).[43] It was now clear to the VDWWA that the Federation was preparing for a work stoppage and they planned to keep the port open with replacement workers organized in a new company union.[44] With the survival of the union at stake, longshoremen ratified a new four year collective agreement in October 1934 under terms favourable to the employer. The union's demands were rejected, the Federation retained control of the dispatch, and the new agreement required the union to assist the employers in maintaining efficiency.[45]

Victory at the negotiation table had a unifying effect on the Federation that proved disastrous to the union. Employers who opposed the Federation's aggressive approach fell in line, remained silent, or did not attend board meetings. Vindicated by a favourable contract, hard-liners who advocated wages cuts, a reduced union membership, and a return to a more compliant work-force now controlled the Federation. After the new contract was signed they continued to press their advantage by appointing J. E. Hall as Federation president with a mandate to "overhaul" the waterfront labour situation.[46] A Federation board member and grain executive, Hall was the organizer of a corporate vigilante group called the "Citizen's League" that helped break the ILA in 1923,

42 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, *Board of Conciliation and Investigation Under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act.* Chairman Mr. Justice H.B. Robertson, J.E.Hall for the B.C. Shipping Federation, McGregor Stuart for the Union. 10 April 1934.

43 CVA, Add. MSS 332, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Loc. 541-C-3, File 1.

44 CVA , Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Walker to Crombie, 12 Sept 1934.

45 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6 File 10, Shipping Federation, Dispatching Regulations Schedule B 1934.

46 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-6, file 9, Shipping Federation to J.E. Hall, 28 Dec. 1934.

his appointment insured the hard-line approach dominated the Federation board and its policy until after the 1935 strike.[47]

The "overhaul" began with a renewed demand by the Federation for a reduction in men. In January 1935 they closed the casual dispatch in the hall's basement to union representatives. [48] Concerned about the hiring of CWWA men from the basement dispatch the union reminded the Federation that according to clause 13 of the new collective agreement both the employers and the union were to be involved when the work-force was increased. They added that according to the agreement, a union official was entitled to be present at the dispatch to monitor the hiring process. The Federation rejected the argument and warned the VDWWA that union representation at the dispatch was a privilege, not a right.[49] They argued that under the 1934 agreement the union representative was obligated to facilitate, not impede, the dispatch.[50] Now beyond the scrutiny of the union, the Federation began to conduct the casual dispatch with no regard for agreed upon rules. A flood of complaints from the union soon followed.[51] Skilled men such as topside operators were being dispatched outside the hall without union supervision.[52] The employers began hiring spare dock men at lower rates while

47 In 1923 Hall claimed that he could marshal a corporate sponsored anti-strike force of 5000 special constables, replacement workers, university students, and boy scouts to oppose the ILA strike. For more on Hall and the 1923 Citizen's League see Russwurm "Constituting Authority". pp.23,24. For the connection between post World War One Citizen's Committees and the Citizen's Leagues of the 1930s see *When the state Trembled.* Reinhold Kramer and Tom Mitchell assert that early citizen's committees formed to combat the labour upheaval of 1919 were never really disbanded but remained to re-define the arena of labour relations from one of industrial negotiations to one of dictating the parameters of "citizenship" as defined by employers. Reinhold Kramer and Tom Mitchell, *When the State trembled: How A.J. Andrews and the Citizen's Committee broke the Winnipeg General Strike*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) pp.318-322. For Hall's career as a grain executive see *The Vancouver Sun.* 1 March 1938.

48 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-6, File 9, Shipping Federation to VDWWA, Jan. 1935.

49 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, 20 Dec.1934.

50 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, file 2, A. Walker to Shipping Federation, 11 Feb.1935.

51 The union complained that the Federation was violating the collective agreement by dispatching casuals without consulting the union. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Walker to Crombie, 20 Dec. 1934. After the new collective agreement was signed in October 1934 the *Heavy Lift* warned that signing was "only half the battle compliance is the next." *Heavy Lift,* 26 October, 1934.

52 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6 File 2, Committee Meeting Notice, 5 April 1935.

experienced union dock men sat idle.[53] Longshoreman Alex Will claimed the surplus "dispatch was really something else. 'It wasn't a dispatch it was just a hand pick. Beer entered into it and wine and whiskey for the bosses and side runners who had the power to say whether your family was going to eat or whether they weren't going to eat at all."[54] In an attempt to regain some control of a hiring process that was slipping away, the union announced its members would not work with casual men whose dispatch slip had not been stamped by a designated member of the VDWWA.[55] The Federation reacted with a letter instructing all foremen and employers to fire anyone who turned in a dispatch slip tampered with by the union. They added that any man fired for the offense would not be dispatched to any other longshore work.[56] Always the major source of waterfront confrontation and discontent, the dispatch quickly became the chief battlefield in a complete collapse of industrial relations. Longshoreman Paddy McDonaugh claimed "just prior to the 35 strike there was a lot of friction. This was evident at every membership meeting, it revolved around working conditions and the men were dissatisfied. I felt that there was going to be a strike on the waterfront because the men were getting so fed up with conditions and dispatch rules."[57]

While the dispatch disputes continued the Federation began to gather information to show the union was promoting inefficiency and insubordination by engaging in an organized slow-down. In February Crombie requested that employers provide reports showing a decline in production. Louis and Wolfe Ltd. responded by reporting a decline in efficiency, but did not document the claim.[58] Empire Shipping President F. Clendenning filed a report showing a thirty percent reduction in hourly production rates on the *Shinten Maru* between voyages in 1933 and 1934. However, the

53 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Crombie to Walker, 19 March 1935.

54 *Man Along The Shore,* p.62.

55 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2 Walker to Crombie, 12 Feb 1935.

56 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, Crombie to all Stevedoring Companies, 19 Feb 1935. The Employers denied this at the Royal Commission Hearings, CVA , Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-6, File 9. Federation Bulletin.

57 *Man Along the Shore,* p. 89.At the royal Commission hearings on the dispute union business agent James Greer claimed there was hundreds of violations of the dispatch rules by the employers. *Ship and Dock.* 21 Sept. 1935.

58 CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Louis and Wolfe Ltd. to Crombie, 18 Feb. 1935.

vessel carried logs, lumber, and general cargo on both voyages. The speed at which these cargoes could be loaded varied, so the percentages of each commodity would have had to be the same on both voyages to justify the comparison. Different hatch configurations, cargo already loaded in the hatch, dock service, and weather could also have affected production. Clendenning's report did not offer this type of detailed comparison; he simply offered raw numbers and called for a pay cut.[59] Indicating they were not automatically prepared to go along with a scheme that falsely implicated longshoremen in a lack of production, other employers filed detailed reports that did make allowances for the complex factors governing ship stowage. Canadian Australian line declined to offer statistics. They noted that judging labour's performance in this manner was very difficult. They claimed statistics would have to be used from the past when factors such as the type of cargo, weather conditions, and wait time all had their effect on the labour's productivity.[60] Canadian Pacific Steamships reported that "with the mixed cargoes handled on our vessels it is not possible to make a definite statement with reference to any one class of cargo."[61] Ballantyne Pier reported no reduction in efficiency between 1933 and 1934.[62] Employers who did supply statistics emphasized the varying conditions of work. On the vessel *Tatania*, Lapointe Pier reported a reduction of seven tons per hour between 1933 and 1934. However, they admitted the report was made by a dock foreman who was unaware of stowage conditions in the hatch. He had simply noted that "it was not possible to stow the cargo aboard the ship as expeditiously as in 1933."[63] Reporting on another vessel, Lapointe claimed a production increase of 1.4 tons per hour aboard the *Point Lobos* between September 1933 and November 1934.[64] Dingwall and Cotts reported, "Candidly our records show that loading averages have been maintained pretty well right through." They added, "Conditions on

59 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Clendenning to Crombie, 18 Feb. 1935.

60 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Canadian Australian Line to Crombie, 4 March 1935.

61 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Canadian Pacific Steamships to Crombie, 20 Feb.1935.

62 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, G.W. Head Supt. Ballantyne Pier to Crombie, 8 March 1935.

63 CVA, Add. MSS Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Lapointe Pier to Crombie, undated.

64 Ibid.

these ships are never the same and stowage at all times is difficult. Therefore all these factors have to be reckoned with and it would obviously be unfair to the men to lay all the blame at their [the union's] door."[65]

Unable to obtain statistics that would implicate the union in a planned slow-down or a lack of efficiency, the Federation shifted tactics. Crombie suggested that rather than asking for reports showing reduced production, the Federation should obtain figures that showed an increase in shipping costs per ton. He asked employers if it would "be possible to state the percentage cost increase which has occurred."[66] To be sure that this second set of reports was not clouded by "mitigating factors" such as job conditions, or the individual opinions of superintendents and foremen, Empire Stevedoring's president Clendenning offered the following solution. He suggested that rather than requiring each company to submit statistics, it would be more expeditious if Shipping Federation employee C.W. Train collected and made himself familiar with the information. Presumably the solution insured that Train, a Federation employee, would interpret the information as Crombie and Clendenning instructed. Thus at any future arbitration, Train rather than a representative of each company would provide testimony that indicated per tonnage costs had increased.[67]

Confronted by an economy that produced a massive reduction in work, the creation of a strikebreaking company union, a surplus dispatch closed to union scrutiny, a potential reclassification and reduction in union numbers based on age and employer prerogative, and a legion of dispatch breaches, the union reacted with a program to oppose the employers' aggression. To broaden their support base, they joined the Longshore and Waterfront Transport Workers of Canada (LWTWC), an umbrella organization representing longshoremen and other waterfront workers in British Columbia. They proposed an eight hour day with two hours overtime paid at double time for a maximum working day of ten hours, equal wages for ship and dock workers, wage

65 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Pickett to Crombie, 22 Feb 1935.

66 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Crombie to all Shipping Federation members, 21 March 1935.

67 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 8, Clendenning to Crombie, 25 March 1935.

parity for all BC longshoremen, and time and a half for holidays, and Saturday afternoons.[68] The job-centred program did not go beyond the 1934 contract proposals and did not equal the conditions that had been achieved by American longshoremen in 1934.[69] Despite the modest proposals, the Federation simply rejected the program and focused on branding the LWTWC and the union's leadership of Ivan Emery, Oscar Salonen, and George Brown as communists leading a docile rank and file union membership astray. In fact their leadership and their program was a continuation of the job centred militancy that had been developing in the VDWWA for ten years. It was the Federation's attitude toward them that had changed. Far from leading an uninformed membership astray, all three men were elected by the rank and file. They were all members of the 1934 negotiation committee that put forth a program supported by a rank and file vote of 641 to 81, a vote that included men in preferred gangs the Federation considered conservative.[70] At a time when gang membership was considered a privilege, when the Federation maintained that only the most trusted, skilled, efficient, and dependable longshoremen, selected solely by the Federation were offered gang membership, all three men were long-time gang members. Five years earlier, Emery had been elected VDWWA president, and then resigned after he failed deliver on a promise to establish union control over gang membership.[71] Despite this major challenge to Federation control he retained his position in a gang. The Federation retained the three men as gang men after a bitter year-long negotiation process in 1934. Trusted and promoted by the Federation over an extended period, they were exactly the type of efficient dependable men that the Federation had demanded in 1923. When Crombie prepared character sketches of the three for the Federation he claimed that, Emery was a smooth and effective speaker, a committed union man and representative, Brown was a tireless worker and union advocate, and Salonen was a committed union advocate and

68 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517- G-6, File 2, Union demands, 17 April 1935. On joining the LWTWC see *Ship and Dock,* Oct 1934.

69 Under the heading "Look this over and make contrasts" the *Heavy Lift* published the highlights of the American collective agreement and encouraged Vancouver men to compare them with their own conditions. *Heavy Lift*, 26 Oct 1934.

70 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-1, File 10.

71 Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* 260-262, also CVA, Add. MSS 279, 521-C-2 , File 8, Crombie to Burns, 8 May 1929.

was “the most dangerous speaker of the three.” All three reports contain a tone of grudging admiration for the character and commitment of the men. Finally, despite admitting there was no evidence for his charges, Crombie concluded they were being influenced by the Communist Party.[72] The Federation subsequently turned on the three men making them the focus of their propaganda and vitriol.

While the Federation vehemently opposed the union’s efforts to broaden their support base, by allying with the LWTWC, they quickly moved to shore up their own connections within the corporate community. Their close relationship with shipping interests south of the border was strengthened by a daily flow of telegrams and correspondence concerning the labour situation. At a downtown meeting of the city’s major corporate interests on April 18 1935, the Federation took the lead in creating a new “Citizens’ League” to crush the VDWWA.[73]

Next, on April 25 Hall cut the Federation’s board of directors from 14 to 5 members.[74] Claiming a large Board was too democratic, he asserted this was “the ideal type of employer organization for labour to deal with [as] they like big committees to play one member against another to hope to confuse the issues this results in a condition of drift as far as employers are concerned.”[75] Ignoring union protests that the new board could not supersede the joint committees established by the collective agreement, Hall defiantly announced that the streamlined board would heretofore conduct joint

[72] CVA, Add.MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-5, File 7 Crombie to Hall, 25 April 1935. For more on Crombie evaluating Emery see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-5, File 8, 25 Confidential, Crombie to Hall, 25 April 1935.

[73] Stanton, *Never Say Die!* p.1. Similar to the “Citizen’s League” the Federation established in 1923, the group utilized anti-communist hyperbole, special police, strike-breakers, and labour spies to break representative unionism. The “League” was typical of vigilante employer groups that were established along the coast during the waterfront strikes of the 1930s. see Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity*,p.251 or Larrowe, *Shape-up or Hiring Hall,* p.101. On the relationship between American and Canadian Federations and the dialogue between Pacific Coast Employers Association President Frank Foisie and Crombie see Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity,* pp.5-22.

[74] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 5, Hall to Walker, 25 April 1935.

[75] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521=B-1 File 2, Memo to Shipping Federation members, 23 May 1935.

committee business on the employers' behalf.[76] He then proceeded to tell the union what they should think and who should speak for it. In a memo to the VDWWA he claimed "there must be a complete change in the attitude of your Association and the methods which you employ when dealing with the problems which arise." He claimed that "there is little, if any hope of satisfactory conditions on the waterfront until the control and direction of your affairs is again in the hands of those who should enjoy the privilege." He added a demand that the union supply financial guarantees for relations to proceed.[77] Intent on replacing the union leadership, Hall asked Crombie for a list of reliable, conservative union men who could be counted on as leaders. Crombie submitted a list that included an ex-business agent and several executive members.[78] He warned Hall that all the men listed supported the union's 1934 contract program that had been rejected by the Federation. With no men remaining that he felt were sufficiently conservative or compliant, Hall decided to break the union and establish Federation control. He asserted that "labour men have to be led, if the employer fails to do this there are many of the men who will accept any leadership that comes along, without giving due consideration as to whether it is good or bad."[79] He claimed

> our board has definitely decided that the longshore labour situation is going to be cleaned up, the radicals eliminated and new arrangements when made are to be with only loyal suitable and competent men. The board's objective is to have this house cleaning take place at a time when it can be accomplished with the minimum of interruption to the traffic of the Port. Ways and means of obtaining this objective are now being developed and will be brought to a head as quickly as possible. The Federation is unwilling under any circumstances to surrender any of its rights as regards the control and dispatch of labour but will take every

[76] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-3, File 3, Royal Commission Report, 1935.

[77] Quote is from, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, J. Hall to A.Walker, 30 April 1935. For another transcript of hall's letter see *Ship and Dock*. 4 may 1935. Hall never specified what exactly he meant by financial guarantees and the union never requested a clarification when they replied. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Hall to Walker, 10 May 1935.

[78] For the list see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-5, File 7.

[79] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-1, Shipping Federation Memorandum, 23 May 1935.

possible step to avoid complications until the proposed plan is ready to be brought into effect.[80]

Pushed aside by the Hall and the streamlined board of directors, Crombie realized his influence with the employer group was at a low point. He had been hired as a labour manager to create a new industrial relations environment in the post-ILA era. He remained committed to the idea that the employers had the right to choose the men in their work-force. However, once the men were selected he claimed that Federation members had to comply with the collective agreement and dispatch rules to manage a productive waterfront. He warned Hall and the employers that the growing solidarity and resistance within the union was a by-product of the Federation's reluctance to implement rotation hiring and their insistence on renewed classification reviews which were alienating even the most conservative union men.[81] However, by May 1935 the labour situation was in the hands of those who had more experience in the exercise of power and the destruction of worker solidarity than in labour management.[82] Angry, contrite, and disappointed, Crombie lamented that the expertise and information he held always made him the star witness for the Federation at any hearing, "often to the detriment of the men." He was consequently no longer sure the labour manager could be neutral or in a position of trust with the men. [83] The Federation's new board was not interested in Crombie's introspection. They retained him as labour manager but removed him from the board of directors.[84] Putting the best face possible on the shuffle Crombie claimed it would allow him to re-connect with the men, but his attempts to have employers comply with the dispatch provisions of the collective agreement continued to be ignored.[85] Dutifully remaining as labour manager he was once again trotted out by the Federation

[80] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-4, File 9, Hall to McLennan, 3 May 1935.

[81] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 2, Crombie confidential to Federation Directors, 16 July 1934.

[82] Pointing to the collection of lawyers and officials representing the Federation at the Royal Commission investigation into the strike, Paddy Coyle a longshoreman for twenty five years testified that he knew none of them except Crombie. *Ship and Dock.* 24 Sept. 1935.

[83] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-6, File 9, Crombie to Hall, 20 May 1935.

[84] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-6, File 9, Crombie to Hall, 23 April 1935.

[85] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, Crombie to all Companies, 6 April 1935.

as a “star expert witness” at the Royal Commission hearings after the strike.[86] However, his ability to influence Federation policy was over until the post-strike reconstruction process began.

Crombie’s assertion that the Federation’s hard line was provoking a more militant reaction from VDWWA proved correct when the union replied to Hall’s demand for a financial guarantee to continue their relationship. Union secretary Allan Walker claimed “the only definite, concrete plan which can be submitted which will guarantee the fullest measure of security possible in this industry consists of control of dispatching and distribution of work and earnings by the union.”[87] At the general membership meeting on May 13, the membership passed a motion declaring that no gang or individual could be dismissed to make way for another gang or individual without union approval. Backed by a threat to pull men off the job if the Federation violated the motion, the union was now openly threatening a work stoppage based on a hiring and dispatch issue.[88] The Federation quickly informed the union the motion violated the collective agreement, reminding them that safety was the only justification for a work stoppage.[89] The union, however did not back down. At the end of May 1935, the VDWWA refused to work cargo they claimed was loaded by non-union labour from Ocean Falls and Powell River. They announced the men “long ago completely lost faith in the fairness and impartiality of the employer controlled dispatching office.”[90] On May 27 longshoremen took further action that revealed how deep rank and file discontent really was. To facilitate the dispatch, gang leaders passed order information from the employers to the Federation’s dispatcher each day. These orders detailed the number of men and gangs the ship required the following day. Amid assertions by the Federation that the rank and file were reluctant to take action and were being led astray by the union’s leadership, gang men stopped providing that service to the Federation. The protest involving the employer’s most efficient, dependable men revealed the true level of dissatisfaction and solidarity

86 *Ship and Dock.* 3 Oct. 1935.

87 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-1, File 10, VDWWA to Hall, 3 May 1935.

88 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 5, Walker to Crombie, 15 May 1935.

89 Ibid.,

90 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, Walker to Hall, 24 May 1935.

among the union's rank and file. The men simply stopped participating in the system they no longer trusted.[91] The next day the union began dispatching men.[92] Crombie reported "the Shipping Federation is taking orders for labour from employers, dispatching is being done by the union on union dispatch slips", and "a condition of co-operative dispatch is actually in effect today."[93] The last thing the Federation wanted to hear from their own labour manager was that a co-operative, worker controlled dispatch was working. When employers began to break ranks to order men through the union, Crombie was ordered to put a stop to the breach of Federation solidarity.[94]At the same time, Hall and the streamlined board took action to push the "clean up" of the longshore situation to a quick resolution. They sought assurances from their attorneys that the longshoremen's refusal to load hot cargo at Ocean Falls and Powell River constituted a breach of the collective agreement that entitled the Federation to terminate the contract and dissolve relations with the VDWWA.[95] They obtained assurances from Joseph Sigmund, president of the CWWA, that a replacement labour pool was available with over 250 men for ship work and another 300 men for the dock, ready to go to work without union recognition.[96]

The opportunity to lock the union out came on June 4 1935 when longshoremen refused to load paper off a barge on to the ship *Anten* at the CPR Pier. Dock workers in Powell River had organized a local of the LWTWC, but when the employers refused to pick a single member from the newly created local in a shape-up to load the barge, Vancouver longshoremen claimed the paper was hot cargo and refused to discharge it.[97] Despite a collective agreement clause that allowed the union two and half hours to supply alternate gangs, the Federation fired the men and immediately hired non-union

91 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-E-1 File 12, Crombie to Hall, 27 May 1935.

92 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, Hall to Walker, 25 May 1935.

93 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-E-1, File 12, Crombie to Hall, 28 May 1935.

94 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-E-1, File 12, Crombie to all Shipping Federation members, 3 June 1935.

95 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-4, File 9, J.W. Deb Farris to Shipping Federation, 30 May 1935.

96 CVA, Add. Mss 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9c, Memo of telephone call, 1 June 1935.

97 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-3, File 3, Royal Commission Report 1935.p.23.

replacements.[98] The following day they declined a union offer to return to work if the fired men were re-hired without discipline.[99] They rejected a government Board of Conciliation to end the dispute, claiming that their association with the VDWWA was over and "contractual arrangements had been completed with another properly constituted union."[100]

The strike dragged on in a battle of attrition for six months during which the union responded as though they were involved in a strike restricted to industrial relations. They consistently tried to re-open negotiations, claiming that rotation dispatch had worked to the satisfaction of both parties south of the border, and lower wages in Vancouver would give employers a competitive advantage.[101] They re-affirmed their commitment to the strike with a vote on October 17, ignored the Federation's red baiting, and remained determined to resume negotiations with a job-based program that had nothing to do with ideology or changing the economic activity of the community.[102] However, the Federation had managed to expand the parameters of the strike to include the threat of sedition and they did not intend to let the union return the focus to job issues. Vital to the Federation's success was the ban on dock side picketing. To keep picketers away from the docks and get replacement workers to work employers knew the ban was essential. They had been advised by their attorneys that picketing "which amounts to not more than simple watching or attending near a place for the purpose of explaining or of communicating information peaceably and without anything being done to interfere with

98 *Ship and Dock,* 20 Sept. 1935.Despite the fact that the Federation and the union were still discussing the issue the Federation had a boatload of replacement workers protected by 200 special police sent from Stanley Park to CPR Pier in less than 2 hours after the incident began. *Ship and Dock*. 5 June 1935.

99 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, VDWWA to J. Hall, 5 June 1935.

100 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc 521-F-3, File 2 Telegrams, Shipping Federation to Dept. Of Labour, 5 June 1935. After agreeing to work at Barnett Mills in 1931 the union claimed they had a verbal guarantee from the Federation that they would not be forced to work unfair cargo. *Ship and Dock.* 4 May 1935.

101 The union's efforts to negotiate included a request for a board of conciliation to mediate the dispute, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5, Mitchell to Harrison, 5 July 1935.

102 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1 File 2, File 9, Walker to Crombie, 18 Oct 1935.

the perfect exercise of free will is not an offence."[103] Therefore to keep the ban in place the Federation knew there had to be the appearance of a threat, violence, or communist revolution. Through the Citizens League they maintained a scare campaign of posters, bulletins, and paid newspaper notices re-affirming their assertion that the union's leadership was under communist influence. Through open letters to longshoremen they hoped to isolate the union membership from their leadership by asserting that it would be rank and file longshoremen not the radical leadership who would suffer in the aftermath of a strike.[104] They were aided in these efforts by the Mayor of Vancouver Gerry McGeer. Elected on an anti-crime platform, McGeer saw the strike as an opportunity to shore up his support in the corporate community, and quickly became an anti-communist crusader. In the weeks prior to the dispute he led a parade of hundreds of police officers in a show of force through downtown Vancouver and claimed that the city was up against a communist revolution that had to be crushed immediately.[105] When women, children and friends of union members participated in the march on Ballantyne Pier on June 18 1935, McGeer dismissed their support as a typical communist tactic used to conceal the marchers' revolutionary intent.[106] When federal labour minister G.A. Gordon suggested that the cost of the strike was prohibitive and it was time to negotiate, Hall rejected the plan and argued that the issue was no longer a simple industrial relations issue. Despite the fact that the union's demands focused solely on wages and working conditions, and never included one word about "directing the economic activity of the community", Hall informed the minister that the question of wages and working conditions was not involved. Dictating to the minister exactly what the dispute was about, he claimed "as you are aware, this is not an ordinary labour dispute as between employer and employee. The point at issue is whether the industrial life of the community is to be carried on by those who have undertaken that responsibility in the past, or by a few radicals who propose to institute an entirely new method of directing

[103] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.520-E-4, File 10, Burns, Walker, and Thomas to Harbour Commission, 17 July 1935.

[104] For a number of open letters see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-3, File 3.

[105] McCandless, "Vancouver's Red Menace".

[106] *The Vancouver Province,* June 19 1935. For a transcript of a CKWX radio speech by McGeer branding the longshore leadership as a "red" menace see *Ship and Dock.* 26 Sept.1935.

our economic activities."[107] He then equated the elimination of the VDWWA with the well-being of the community arguing "the situation now prevailing here should not be permitted to continue and that steps should be taken by the proper authorities, without delay, to free this community from the reign of terror in which we are living."[108] When the minister offered the services of his government and its Dominion Fair Wages Officer F. Harrison to help negotiate a "definite and satisfactory agreement," Hall flatly rejected the offer informing Gordon that the Federation was working with a new union."[109]

The VDWWA knew the Federation counted on government support or inaction during the dispute.[110] They knew that the Federation held Citizens, League meetings and had applied to house strike breakers in federal facilities.[111] They knew that police chief. Foster had supervised the protection of strike breakers during the 1923 strike.[112] They knew that over the next twelve years Foster served as the head of the Federation's protection committee, as an executive board member, and as a shipping committee representative on the Vancouver Board of Trade and Merchant's Exchange.[113] They

[107] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 4, J.E. Hall to W.A. Gordon, 19 Aug 1935.

[108] Ibid.

[109] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 4, Gordon to Hall, 8 Aug. 1935. Or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 2, Gordon to Hall, 8 Aug, 1935. The Federation was actually working with two new unions, the CWWA chartered in 1934, and the VLA chartered by the Federation's lawyers on July 22 1935, CVA, Add Mss 279, Loc. 520-G-4, File 9, E.Bull to J.Hall, 22 July 1935.

[110] Strikers were aware that the Federal Government was allowing the Citizen's league to use the Beattie Street Armories to hold meetings. *Heavy Lift*, 8 July 1935.

[111] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-7, File 3, Hall to Canadian Minister of Immigration, Canadian National Telegraph, 11 June 1935.or see *Heavy Lift,* 8 July 1935.

[112] CVA*,* Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-1, File 3, H.Bell Irving to the Shipping Federation, Nov. 1923. Foster appointed head of Shipping Federation Protection committee, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-4, File 2, Crombie to Foster, Dec. 14 1923, Foster appointed to Executive Board of Shipping Federation.

[113] The major shipping stake holders in the city established a special committee to control all aspects of the trade. The Shipping Federation and Foster were charged with the management of labour. CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File10, Special Shipping Committee Meeting, 14 May 1924.

knew that Foster's recent appointment as Vancouver's Chief Constable revealed the growing influence of shipping capital on the economic and political fabric of the city.[114]

However, the union and perhaps the minister had no way of knowing just how close the Federation and the government had become. Gordon's letter indicates the Minister was either unaware of his subordinate's involvement in the dispute or, was trying to distance the government from his activity. Both Hall and Harrison had been involved in the 1923 strike, Hall as an organizer of an earlier Citizens' League, and Harrison as an assistant to the Dominion's Fair Wage Officer. By 1935 both had been promoted, Hall to President of the Shipping Federation, and Harrison to Dominion Fair Wages Officer. By the time Gordon made his offer, Harrison and Hall were already corresponding on a first name basis.[115] In a letter that was actually written by Hall and simply signed by Harrison, the ministerial representative claimed he had to appear impartial in the dispute and then congratulated the Citizens' League propaganda committee for keeping the public informed "as to the actual situation which prevails" on the waterfront.[116] When Salonen, Emery, and Brown arranged a meeting with Harrison to offer their resignations as a way to re-open negotiations, Hall took pre-emptive action to make sure they did not resign. The union leaders suggested to Harrison that given the propaganda regarding their leadership, they were prepared to quit and allow the Federation to negotiate with a new group of representatives elected by the men. Far from duping the rank and file in a communist plot as the employers claimed, Hall feared the union's leadership was about to undermine Federation propaganda by resigning for the benefit of the membership. He instructed Harrison to reject the offer and inform the union men that the Federation was no longer dealing with striking members of the VDWWA. They would negotiate only with men who were currently working behind the

[114] Foster's Shipping Federation experience was omitted from the biographical sketch that accompanied his appointment in the *Vancouver Province.* 3 Jan. 1935. For more on Foster and policing workers in Vancouver see, Lani Russwurm, "Constituting Authority: Policing Workers and the Consolidation of Police Power in Vancouver, 1918-1939", (Vancouver, Simon Fraser University, Master's Thesis, 2007)pp.78,79.

[115] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5, Harrison to Hall 20 July 1935.or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5, Harrison to Hall, 29 July 1935.

[116] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5, F.E. Harrison to W.B. Harris, 16 July 1935.

picket lines.[117] Under the circumstances the union men declined to resign. Hall and Harrison had effectively prevented a potential public relations coup for the union, and eliminated an avenue of negotiation that might have preserved the VDWWA. Despite a considerable amount of support from relief camp workers and other community groups, the Federation's propaganda had succeeded and the picketing ban remained in place.[118] A further blow to the union came when American longshoremen, forced by arbitration awards that limited their ability to support a strike beyond the boundaries of their collective agreement, began to work Vancouver cargo to preserve their own hard-won conditions.[119] With the Federation, local, and federal governments lined up against them, denied dockside access to picket, and isolated without international union support, the union called the strike off in December.[120]

The Federal Government appointed Judge H.H. Davis to oversee a Royal Commission to investigate the dispute. Davis found the union entirely at fault for the work stoppage and the Ballantyne incident. He claimed longshoremen were led astray by irresponsible leadership and asserted that the Powell River incident, the union dispatch, and a series of work stoppages, justified the Federation's termination of the collective agreement.

For the second time in twelve years the Federation had crushed representative unionism on the Vancouver waterfront. Presenting the union's leadership as a radical communist cadre bent on sedition, the employers relied on red baiting hyperbole, to put together a corporate coalition and crush the strike. But the dispute was not led by radicals it was led by working longshoremen elected by a rank and file prepared to battle the Federation over long standing job issues. Those issues and the solidarity the men displayed would quickly resurface in the post 1935 company union period.

[117] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-a-7, File 5, Harrison to Hall, 17 July 1935.

[118] For a note of thanks to stores, restaurants, trucking firms, farmers, fishermen, and individuals thanking them for donations and support, see *Ship and Dock* 16 August 1935.

[119] *Markholt, Maritime Solidarity*, pp.235-250.or Nelson, *Waterfront Workers,* p.195.

[120] Hall rejected the union's final offer to drop all demands except to continue to recognize the VDWWA, CVA Add. MSS 279, Loc. 517-G-6, File 2, Hall to Mitchell, 10 Dec. 1935.

Chapter 4.

Resilient Solidarity

> We are about to see a new world: no longer may we look at master and slave in the old interpretation.[1] Shipping Federation Memo, 1944.

While police and special constables kept picketers away from the docks and the VDWWA vainly tried to re-open negotiations, the Shipping Federation began to establish the post-strike work regime. Before the strike ended, they began to cull the replacement work force through classification and dismissals.[2] When the dispute ended in December, all pretence concerning a partnership between labour and management was abandoned. To promote divisive competition among the work force, the Federation created three company unions, the Canadian Waterfront Workers Association (CWWA) containing mostly strike breakers, the Vancouver Longshoremen's Association (VLA) with returned VDWWA men, and the North Vancouver Longshoremen's Association (NVLA) with predominately First Nations workers.[3] The constitution of the CWWA, the largest of the three unions, reveals how little autonomy and representation members would have.[4] As dictated by the Federation, the union's mission was "to improve workers' standards of efficiency and productivity." They were not permitted to strike or affiliate with organizations the Federation deemed radical. To prevent the union leadership from

1 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-2, File 1, Shipping Federation Memo, 22 Aug. 1944.

2 Special forms for rating the efficiency of strike breakers were delivered to employers on August 16 1935. Each employer was issued a code number so they would not have to sign the completed reports, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc.520-F-1, File 2, Hall to all Federation members, 10 Aug.1935.

3 For the numbers in each union see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5.

4 The three unions were governed by a similar constitution and agreement. For a file showing the Federation drafting the constitution see CVA, Add. MSS 279, 520-E-6, File 9c.

spending union dues on anti-employer politics or propaganda, dues would only be distributed to elected officers approved by the Federation.[5] The Federation would not promise to employ or dispatch union members. Any man fired by an employer with the approval of the Federation was dismissed from working for all Federation employers, and the union was obligated to facilitate the dismissal.[6] To prevent non-resident radicals from infiltrating the union, members had to be residents of Vancouver for at least one year. However, the residency requirement was removed for men who had worked behind picket lines during the strike. Men who were interested in longshore work were instructed to apply to the Federation. Hiring and dispatch were to be controlled solely by the Federation through their Labour Manager. Any amendments to the union constitution were subject to Federation approval and they reserved the right to terminate the contract with two days' notice.[7]

The Federation quickly let it be known that they were not interested in the union's input on policy making. At their first executive meeting, held behind picket lines at Ballantyne Pier, the CWWA executive passed a motion establishing a committee to examine and propose solutions to the waterfront's major problems. The Federation replied that they alone would decide and inform the union what the waterfront's problems were and the committee was subsequently dissolved.[8] To prevent intervention into waterfront policy making and to insure that the union understood its place, Commander Johnson of the Federation was placed on the CWWA executive.[9] Major Crombie was asked to attend all executive meetings to provide guidance, and "education," and to maintain "the perfect understanding" now prevailing between employer and employee."[10] To spread that "perfect understanding" the CWWA published a company union newspaper, the *Cargo Hook*. Created and sponsored by the Federation, the paper was

5 City of Vancouver Archives, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Add. MSS 332, 541-D-7, File 7, CWWA Constitution.

6 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7, File 10, CWWA, B.C. Shipping Federation Collective Agreement, 1935.

7 CVA, Add MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7, File 10, CWWA constitution.

8 CVA, Add MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 1, CWWA Executive minutes, 9 July 1935.

9 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 2, CWWA Executive minutes, 25 July 1935.

10 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 1, CWWA Executive minutes, 7 Nov. 1935.

designed to replace the job-oriented news of VDWWA papers the *Heavy Lift* and *Ship and Dock* with innocuous stories about company picnics and sporting events.[11] The CWWA claimed the *Cargo Hook* was not a "mudslinging, but a clean wholesome paper in keeping with the organization it represents." In another issue union members were warned to expect little in the way of real union representation. The CWWA is "not to be used for purposes of propaganda or attack, controversies of any kind will be avoided," wrote one editorialist, adding that as for "your executive, you are fortunate indeed in having the type of men exemplified in them, self-sacrificing, earnest, hard-working, they are steering this association through its birth pangs to what I am convinced is a new order on the waterfront. It is a thankless job wherein personal favouritism and prejudice must be submerged don't make it hard for them by expecting personal favours."[12] With the VDWWA crushed, malcontents blacklisted, new workers hired, and draconian contractual arrangements in place, it appeared the Federation had won a complete victory successfully crushing longshore solidarity. However, a number of factors would make it difficult for the Federation to turn back the clock to 1923.

Red-baiting, a useful propaganda tool in 1923 and 1935, was not as effective after the 1935 strike. In 1923 the Federation asserted that the ILA was under the influence of reds and radicals and had to be "cleaned up." Twelve years later in 1935, Citizens League propaganda again loudly proclaimed the VDWWA membership was being led astray by the "red" leadership of Salonen, Emery, and Brown. For the second time in a dozen years the Federation had utilized a strike to "clean up" a so-called "red menace" on the waterfront. When the strike ended, the public, politicians, longshoremen, and even corporations assumed that with the radical leadership gone, the majority of longshoremen would return to work. However, after the strike the Federation not only purged the leadership, but refused to re-hire hundreds of apolitical rank and file longshoremen. As the post-strike situation became clear, only 362 of 900

[11] For a number of copies see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-5, File 4.

[12] For a number of issues of the *Cargo Hook* see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-5, File 4. The first quote is from the July 1936 issue, p.1, the second quote is from Feb. 1936 issue p.1.

VDWWA members were back on the job.[13] Senior rank and file men such as Percy Robertson and Bob Daly, both twenty-year men with no radical reputation and no ties to the VDWWA leadership, were just two of the hundreds of men who were left to wonder why they were dismissed.[14] Former soldiers rewarded for their patriotism in the 1923 post-strike restructuring found that their service meant little in 1935. Veterans such as E.A. Edward, wounded in World War I, who complained that he was not a picketer or radical but, "he had "struck merely as a member of a union," were dismissed without special consideration.[15] Many members of the public were outraged, such as a soldier's wife who railed at Chief of Police Foster to "get out and be gone. I am ashamed that I was ever a member of the [Canadian] legion after seeing your dirty work."[16] Others noted that when it came to re-hiring, the quest to root out communists and radicals, so important during the strike, had been supplanted by production considerations. In a letter signed "a martyr to the cause" a fired longshoreman claimed that two well known "communists or socialists or whatever you call them" had been back working for a year but they [the Federation] would not take him back. He added, "I am not a talker I had nothing to say, only voted wrong."[17].

Before 1923, in the days of dock side shape ups, the single men, ex-loggers, and miners, with few ties to the community who worked the waterfront could be fired without repercussions from society at large. However, Vancouver had changed as a port and so had its workforce. After a very public strike, a police riot, and a barrage of anti-communist propaganda from the employers and Citizen's League, the idea that not just the leadership, but two-thirds of the city's longshoremen were radicals subject to dismissal seemed farfetched to many in the community at large. The dismissed men were permanent workers, fathers, husbands, uncles, and brothers, men with connections to the community, and a host of their support mechanisms insured the

13 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc 521-B-1, File 2, Federation memo.

14 CVA, ADD. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-5, File 14.

15 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-5, File 5, J.A. Clark, Barrister and Solicitor to Crombie, 12 Feb 1938.

16 Parnaby, *Citizen Docker,* p.154.

17 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-F-2, File 5, Anonymous to Crombie, 27 Oct 1936.

Federation's actions did not go unnoticed. Veteran's societies, attorneys, charitable groups such as the Salvation Army, private enterprises, and city politicians reminded the Federation that it was assumed once the union's so-called communistic leadership had been removed most longshoremen would be re-hired.[18] Even the Federation's old ally in the Federal Ministry of Labour, Harrison, claimed they should live up to their promise not to discriminate against ex-ILA men in the post-strike hiring process.[19]

World War ll also made red baiting a less effective union busting option. Prior to the Normandy landings in 1944, the Red Army held back the Nazis in Europe until the second front opened. With the Soviet Union as an ally, red baiting became a politically questionable option for the Federation until anti-communist vitriol re-emerged as a corporate tool during the McCarthy era, particularly in America where the Government consistently attempted to deport Harry Bridges as a communist. In Vancouver the Federation would occasionally attempt to stir the communist pot in correspondence with the Federal Government, branding first the emerging ILA and then the ILWU communistic. However, it was clear to many politicians, Vancouver citizens, and even to pragmatists within the Federation, that communistic red baiting hyperbole had been milked to the limit during two very public strikes. It was an option the Federation could not exploit to any great effect against the emerging rank and file solidarity of the second company union period between 1935 and 1945.[20]

Another factor was the B.C. Shipping Federation did not have the advantage of a company union system along the west coast of the United States after 1935. South of the border waterfront company unions had been swept away by federal longshore

[18] CVA, Add MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-2, File 3, Vancouver Alderman H. Cory on behalf of the Harbour and Utilities Commission to J. Hall, 29 Oct 1936. For example Attorney William Patterson, and Penn lumber and trading wrote letters of support on behalf of Percy Robinson and Bob Daly respectively.

[19] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-3, File 2, Harrison to Cooke, Federation President, 10 May 1939.

[20] Red baiting would once again be effective during the McCarthy era during the 1950s when the ILWU was cast out of the CIO for suspected communist affiliations. The US government consistently attempted to deport Harry Bridges for allegedly being a communist until the U.S. Supreme Court dismissed proceedings against him in 1955. Bill Sharpsteen, *The Docks,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)pp.116-124.

arbitration agreements. In 1934 ILA President Joe Ryan struck a deal with employers to end the bitter strike in US Pacific ports without consulting the union's rank and file. American longshoremen led by Harry Bridges rejected the settlement that would have ended the dispute on terms favourable to the employers.[21] The rank and file went on to win arbitration agreements that gave longshoremen union representation of their choice, collective bargaining rights, a coastwise agreement, union hiring halls, and union dispatchers. They solidified these gains, improved conditions, and increased wages in a 1936 strike. When employers in San Francisco attempted, as the Federation had in Vancouver, to change the union's leadership by refusing to negotiate until the local replaced its representatives, the union sarcastically replied that their officials were elected for a year, and until such a time as the employers were prepared to allow the union to select the employer's board of directors the current elected union officials were the longshoremen that the companies would bargain with.[22] In 1937 west coast longshoremen separated from the ILA, formed the ILWU, and joined the CIO, they were embarking upon what longshoreman and writer Stan Weir would call a twenty five year example of industrial democracy not seen before in North America.[23]

In Vancouver following the 1935 strike, the Federation feared the militant American union would move north. President Hall claimed "the longshore industry is and will continue to be directly affected by conditions to the south, and any failure on our part to take all the steps necessary to forestall adverse developments arising from that source undoubtedly will have disastrous results"[24] They began to hold daily strategy meetings to monitor the American labour situation, shifted the focus of their propaganda

21 *The ILWU Story,* pp.5,6., Nelson, *Waterfront Workers,* p.143.and Sharpsteen, *The Docks,* pp.108-110.For the employer's position on the rejected agreement see The Pacific Coast Longshoremen's Strike of 1934. Statement of Thomas G. Plant, president of the Waterfront Employers Union of San Francisco to the National Longshoremen's Board, July 11 1934 .pp.18-21.

22 Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity*, p.50.

23 Weir, *Singlejack Solidarity,* pp. 93,94.

24 CVA, Add. MSS 279. Loc. 520-F-3, File 12, J.E. Hall to all Federation members, 8 Jan. 1936.The Federation did not restrict their lobbying efforts to the Federal Government. For the Federation warning the Provincial Labour Minister about the dangers of foreign labour organizations see CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File 12 Johnston to Peterson, 1937.

rhetoric from communism to the "threat from the south," and portrayed the ILWU's industrial democracy as a dangerous "foreign intervention" and a threat to Canadian sovereignty.[25] Vancouver Board of Trade President J. McCarter argued the federal government should take all steps necessary to prevent this "foreign intervention" into what he asserted were friendly relations between Vancouver's company unions and the Shipping Federation. He claimed "these outside efforts" "represent not so much a question of wages as a question of definite domination which cannot be tolerated in Canada."[26] Shipping Federation director R.D Williams demanded that the government act, arguing that "Canada is not a domestic adjunct of the United States but a sovereign country capable of handling its own affairs."[27] As an alternative, they claimed the CWWA and VLA were "clean" outfits run by Canadians.

Vancouver longshoremen were quick to notice the improved wages and conditions gained by American longshoremen after 1934. They had always maintained contact with dock workers south of the border and quickly attempted to open relations with the ILWU. American longshoremen were also anxious to export representative unionism across the border. Despite the fact they had been forced to work Vancouver cargo during the strike, incidents of spontaneous rank and file American support against company unionism in Vancouver continued after 1935.[28] The ILA chartered a Vancouver local in 1936, but it failed when the Federation made sure that the fledgling local never received any work that would legitimize a claim of international affiliation. [29]

[25] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File12, Hall to Directors, 28 Sept 1936. Shipping Federations along the west coast had been warned by W.D. Vanderbelt of Grace Lines in in 1934 that their unfair hiring practices were going to cause longshoremen to "clean house" in the next set of negotiations, see Markholt, *Maritime Solidarity,* p.57.

[26] CVA, Add. MSS 279, 521-C-2, File 7, J. McCarter to Minister of Labour, 19 Nov. 1936.

[27] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, file 4, Williams to Minister of Labour, 17 Nov 1936.

[28] American rank and file longshoremen refused to handle cargo loaded by non-union longshoremen on several occasions despite clauses in their agreement that forbade sympathy striking. For Examples of spontaneous rank and file American support see, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7, File 5 or CVA, Add MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-7- File 4e.

[29] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-F-7, File 6, Minutes of a meeting of British and foreign steamship owners and operators of the Shipping Federation of British Columbia, 4 Nov. 1936, or CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-1, File 2, Memo on the Labour Situation in Vancouver, 20 Aug. 1936.

At their 1940 convention the ILWU made organization in Canada part of its program.[30] In 1941 at a Victoria meeting in to discuss how to prevent the influence of radicals In British Columbia ports, longshoremen informed the Federation that the way to oppose a so-called radical threat was to allow free unions on the ILWU model. They recommended that "all barriers real or imaginary, be removed that at present in any way restrict their [the union's] freedom of action, as the best method of offsetting the inroads of reactionary or subversive elements."[31] During the 1935 strike the Federation had managed to present the VDWWA leadership and their job-centered program as the seditious plans of a Muscovite cadre. Defeated in Vancouver, the same program had not caused a revolution in the United States. American ports and longshoremen were functioning with representative unions, equalization of earnings, and a union dispatch. As the second company union period progressed, a group of American longshoremen trying to export job-sharing hardly sounded insidious to a political and corporate community already weary from an expensive strike in 1935. Despite their best lobbying efforts the Federation could not change the fact that the United States was also a sovereign nation "capable of handling its own affairs," they could not change American labour law, and they could do little about the American ILWU. The Canadian government did not prevent organizers from the ILWU, CIO, or the AFL from crossing the border to meet with Vancouver longshoremen or speaking at membership meetings.[32] Nevertheless the Federation was not prepared to accept an international coast-wide alliance between Vancouver longshoremen and the American ILWU. They continued to promote their company union as a "clean" Canadian alternative to the ILWU until 1945 when an ILWU charter was granted in Vancouver.

Yet there was recognition within the Federation's Board of Directors that conditions were different after the 1935 strike. Once the consensus that had crushed the VDWWA was gone the competition for labour returned. Hiring based on favouritism or

30 *Man Along the Shore,* p.128.

31 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-1, File 20, B.C. Council of Longshoremen statement, 20 Jan. 1941.

32 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 5, Roscoe Craycroft of the C.I.O. and a Mr. Collins of the AFL met with the CWWA executive and the general membership of the union.

from outside the Federation re-surfaced shortly after the strike. When the union protested that if the process of hiring outside the dispatch continued it meant "the destruction of all confidence between employer and employee", employers that had remained silent during the strike became more vocal.[33] There was an emerging consciousness within the board that crushing the union in a costly strike and changing the composition of the work force was not going to remove solidarity. After all it had not in 1923. Dingwall and Cotts Ltd., who had suggested Vancouver longshoremen should be paid the same as their American peers, were concerned about the detrimental effects of favouritism and suggested an even distribution of work and earnings to prevent it.[34] Director H. Stevenson warned that the structures the Federation had set up were the cause of many problems; he claimed "the expensive and somewhat complicated machinery which we have set up, fails to translate into action the promises and intentions which we as directors have expressed towards the groups of men working for us."[35]

Desperate to prevent an alliance between Vancouver and American longshoremen, the Federation began to insist that employers comply with the post-strike dispatch rules they had established. Crombie claimed "the board of directors feel it is most important that nothing should be done by members of the Shipping Federation which might create in the minds of the men the feeling that the terms and conditions of our agreement will not be strictly observed under all circumstances."[36] He received influential backing when J. E. Hall added his voice to the employers advocating equalization of earnings [rotation hiring].[37] Now aware that a militant culture would re-emerge among the men if there was not a change in hiring practices Hall claimed "the co-operation of the principle employers, vitally essential in the procedure being followed to establish a loyal and efficient personnel, is not forthcoming. Discrimination and favour

[33] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9c, CWWA to J. Hall, 13 Nov. 1935.

[34] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-2, File 1, Pickett to Crombie, 29 Sept 1936.

[35] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 14, Stevenson to Clendenning, 9 Oct 1936.

[36] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-1, File 3, Crombie to all Shipping Federation members. 24 July 1937.

[37] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 1, J. Hall to B. Johnson, 23 April 1937.

in the distribution of work opportunities continues, history is repeating itself and in my opinion, the reaction to unsound practices of this nature will become effective much more quickly than has been the case in the past the psychology of the working man today is not what it was five or ten years ago"[38]

He was only partially correct. Forces of resistance within the CWWA would emerge more quickly than they had in the past but the psychology of longshoremen had not changed. The CWWA men had simply witnessed the previous twelve years of company unionism. In 1923 the Federation had claimed that the hall, gang system, and limited rotation would provide an efficient permanent work force with a good living and a stake in the community. As longshoremen realized the Federation would never deliver on the promise, they built on their job solidarity and became more militant. The men who made up the CWWA and VLA in 1936 would have been under no illusions that the Federation would deliver these conditions. They had watched as their predecessors, many of them strike breakers from 1923, were tear gassed, beaten, blacklisted, and branded communists for seeking decent wages, equality in hiring, and union representation. They immediately witnessed the Federation's lack of loyalty when they began to classify replacement workers and dismiss men they deemed inefficient before the strike ended. [39] When the dispute ended they saw men who had worked for the Federation behind picket lines enduring the vilification of striking longshoremen dismissed to make way for experienced striking workers based solely on the production needs of the Federation. They watched as political considerations that drove the Federation's propaganda during the strike were abandoned in favour of economic requirements. The Federation had changed the men in the work force but the draconian work environment, administrative structures, and lack of loyalty that precipitated the VDWWA's militancy were still in place. It was immediately clear to the new men that

[38] CVA, Add MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-3, File 12, Hall to Federation Board, 8 Jan. 1936. This debate among employers was happening south of the border at the same time. American shipping capital was beginning to realize that a single employer's problem had to be viewed as an industry problem. They realized that if an employer association [federation] was to be effective it had to have the autonomy and authority to act as a governing body for the industry as a whole. Kimeldorf, *Reds Or Rackets,* p.65.

[39] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-2, File 4, Federation President to CWWA, 13 Feb. 1936.

loyalty was not a feature that the Federation embraced and they quickly began to re-establish a culture of solidarity and collective action.[40]

When work resumed after the 1935 strike men who embraced the independence that a fluctuating work environment provided were the men that remained. The nature of the job was its own culling process, as those unable to meet the physical requirements and unpredictability of the job simply stopped coming to the hall and quit even as the Federation began their own round of dismissals. The new men who remained soon attempted to make the CWWA / VLA a representative union. Even before the strike ended they demanded consultation in the dismissal process.[41] They refused to rubber stamp the dismissal of four men branded as communists without further evidence.[42] They protested the daily evaluations by individual foremen that often resulted in dismissal from all waterfront work, maintaining that due to the nature of the job foremen and superintendents did not see individual men often enough to make a cogent overall judgement on their performance.[43] They demanded an end to the contract clause that prevented a man fired by one employer from working for all others.[44]

They attempted to put aside differences after the strike and present a united front against the employers. When there was little work for the VLA, their members joined the former strike breakers in the CWWA. To promote harmony between the "old chum" and "the new chum," the union lobbied to standardize gangs to handle all cargo and integrate returned and new men within gangs.[45] One year after the CWWA was chartered only one member of the original executive appointed by the Federation survived the election

40 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9c, Labour spies within the new company union noted that radicals were already gaining strength within the union, 23 Dec.1935.

41 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 1, Clause 11 of the Collective Agreement gave the union limited influence in the dismissal process. CWWA Executive meeting minutes, 4 June 1936.

42 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9c, CWWA to Crombie, 9 Sept. 1935. Or CVA, Add. MSS 332, 541-C-3, File 1, CWWA Executive minutes, 4 June 1936.

43 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9c, CWWA to Crombie, 30 Oct. 1935.

44 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7, File 12 , 1937 Collective Agreement between the B.C. Shipping Federation, the CWWA and the VLA.

45 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9c, CWWA to Hall, 27 Nov. 1935.

process, as the membership replaced them with a balanced executive of old and new men. By 1940 not a single charter member or original executive member of the CWWA was on the union's executive committee.[46]

On the job, the union attempted to establish load limits on several commodities such as pulp, paper, and lumber. The increased capacity of ship's lifting gear permitted large loads prepared-off site to be lifted down below for hand stowage. Without the need to prepare the load on the dock, there was no rest between lifts for the men in the hatch. As soon as exhausted longshoremen finished hand stowing the previous lift another large prepared load was winched aboard. To provide a short break between lifts and to prevent huge loads that tested the safety limits of ship's gear, the union opposed the pre-stowage of dock dollies before the shift, sought a tonnage limit on individual lifts, and demanded an end to prepared loads arriving from sawmills.[47] There were also spontaneous incidents of solidarity. For example, longshoremen slowed down on finishing ships to make sure the job went into overtime, and they began to take job action to protest unsafe work practices.[48] When hold man Martin refused to use an unsafe ladder and was fired, the gang supported him and walked off the job. In an example of how things had changed, despite the fact that the gang had conducted a spontaneous work stoppage supported by the union, there were no repercussions. Neither Martin nor the gang were disciplined for the incident. Martin was merely reprimanded for his use of "unparliamentary language."[49]

Within a year after the 1935 strike the VDWWA's familiar demands for rotation hiring and equalization of earnings resurfaced through the CWWA and VLA. [50] Work was

[46] CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 2, CWWA Executive minutes, 1936, Ibid., File 3, CWWA executive minutes, 11 Oct 1940.

[47] CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc.541-C-3, Executive minutes, 9 Oct. 1940, For a list of load limits on commodities see CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 5, VWWA general membership meeting minutes, 23 Aug 1943, For protests on load size see CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc.541-C-3 File 3, 26 June 1940.

[48] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-7, File 1, CWWA and VLA from Crombie, 13 Dec. 1940.

[49] CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc.541-C-3, File 3, Executive minutes, 25 Sept. 1940.

[50] CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9b, CWWA to Crombie, or CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-G-3, File 2, CWWA Executive meeting minutes, 7 Oct !936.

moving away from the strictly controlled Federation gangs toward surplus work at the hall. Rather than hire regular gangs employers began to assemble scratch gangs and order skilled men off hall rotation lists. Winch drivers and jitney drivers were picked off the spare board, or from lists of skilled gang men.[51] When the employers continued to break dispatch rules by ordering late from the hall or making up scratch gangs instead of ordering regular gangs, men began to move out of gangs and adapt to the new reality by seeking surplus employment at the dispatch hall.[52] To facilitate the move toward the dominance of the hall and to equalize earnings the union suggested that for every seven gangs dispatched a scratch gang should be dispatched from surplus boards.[53] To further the distribution of hall work, they passed a motion that surplus men replacing gang members were not to be transferred with the gang to another job, but returned to the hall.[54]

The growing solidarity and job-centered militancy of the union was enhanced when World War ll began. Labour shortages were quick to develop as men went into the service or moved to higher paying industries. The shortages reduced the men's dependency on longshore work. They applied for temporary withdrawal status to pursue alternate vocations such as fishing, managing property, or working on a family farm.[55] Other men, such as O. Littler who was on loan to the shipyards and engaged in war work were allowed to retain their union status despite long absences.[56] Men also began to withdraw by simply holding back on a daily basis not signing in for work. Job picking

51 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520- D-1, File 2 B.C. Shipping Federation Gang File.

52 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-3, File 2, Crombie to all Directors 13 Sept 1938, or CVA, Add MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-7, Labour Manager to all Companies, 2 Oct. 1940.

53 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 1, CWWA Executive minutes, 22 May 1936.To further move the work away from regular gangs toward the hall, any gangs that required less than 11 men would be picked at the hall. CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc 541-D-7, File12, Clause 28, Collective Agreement, 1937.

54 Ibid., Collective Agreement 1937, clause 23.

55 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, Files A, B, and C, CVA, Add. MSS 332 Loc. 541-C-3, Files 4 or 9, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-B-1, File 8, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-3, File 7, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-G-7, File 2, all show men leaving to pursue other activities or employment.

56 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521- B-4, File 14, W.J. Wardle to Crombie, 7 June 1944

had returned and there was little Crombie could do about it during a labour shortage.[57] Pursuing alternate vocations, withdrawing from work, job picking, and the move away from the Federation's permanent gangs began a long term trend toward the solidarity and casualization associated with the hall. Working from the hall became more lucrative than gang work and men began to gravitate toward it, attracted by the money and independence.[58] The Federation's plan for decasualization had failed and their efforts had ironically institutionalized a casual system on the waterfront that was being embraced by longshoremen.[59]

Longshoremen persistently worked to turn the CWWA and VLA into rank and file unions mandated to police the dispatch, collective agreement, and the daily confrontation of the work place. Regular elections and provisions for a recall of officers by forty petitioning members and a majority vote insured responsiveness to the rank and file[60] By 1937 business agents were required to be on call, attend the dispatch, tour job sites on a daily basis, and file reports at union meetings to keep men abreast of current job issues.[61] Replacements on the job had to be cleared by the labour manager and the business agent; they were not provided without union approval.[62] Men who met with the employers had the right and were required to have a union representative present.[63] To prevent favouritism and distribute the work, all men were required to clear overtime with

57 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-7, File 1, 26 July 1939.

58 For men following the work see CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 2, CWWA Executive minutes, 24 Feb. 37.

59 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-C-3, File 2, Crombie to Federation Directors, 13 Sept. 1938.Longshoremen continued to protect the dominance of work from the hall until the 1970s when Vancouver employers were able to obtain a contract clause permitting a limited number of permanent workers at each dock. Ship work continued to be dispatched solely from the hall. On the defence of the hall as a factor that insured equity and openness see Larrowe, *Harry Bridges,* p.97. Bridges claimed the hall insured equalization which "is the fundamental objective of the union, and equalization includes equal requirements of reporting, equal division of the desirable jobs, equal acceptance of unpleasant tasks, equal regularity as well as quantity of employment, and equal sharing of the work when times are bad."

60 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7, File 8, 1937 CWWA Constitution.

61 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 3, Executive minutes, 30 Nov. 1939, CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7, File 8, CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541- C-3 File b3.

62 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7 File 12.

63 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 4, Executive meeting minutes, 26 Feb. 1942.

the union or be subject to discipline.[64] All dismissals had to go before a joint advisory and negotiations committee. Rotation was instituted for spare men and for individual skill jobs such as jitney driving.[65] Commodity differentials were won for dangerous or dirty cargo such as lime, salmon, caustic soda, salt fish, and phosphates.[66] The employers maintained the right to determine who was qualified for specific skills and commodities, but the union insisted that once they were approved by the Federation, men certified for specific work were to be hired on a rotation basis.[67] The contract and dispatch were becoming increasingly complex and both the Federation and the union began to concentrate on contract language to obtain an advantage in the unique work environment. As early as 1937 amalgamation had been discussed at CWWA and VLA meetings. When the two unions amalgamated in 1941 without complaint from the Federation to form the Vancouver Waterfront Workers Association (VWWA), longshoreman Sam Engler claimed they were autonomous enough to select their own men without company interference.[68] As World War ll continued representatives from the AFL and the CIO crossed the border to speak at union membership meetings courting the VWWA. On February 17 1944 the Federal Government passed Order in Council PC 1003 giving workers the right to representative unions and collective bargaining. Within two months on March 16 1944 the VWWA held a special membership meeting to accept an ILWU charter in Vancouver.[69] Vancouver Longshoremen had their first independent representative union and their first international affiliation in twenty one years.

64 CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 3 Executive meeting minutes, 8 Jan. 1941.

65 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 521-A-3, File 7, VWWA to Crombie, 29 Jan. 1943.

66 For a list of commodity and skill differentials see CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-D-7, File 12

67 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-E-6, File 9b, Hall to all Directors, or CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 2, 2 May 1938, CWWA Executive minutes.

68 Stanton, *Never Say Die!*, p.70. The North Vancouver Longshoreman's Association amalgamated with the VWWA in 1943, CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-D-6, File 8.

69 Membership meeting CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3 File 3. AFL, CIO representatives meeting Vancouver longshoremen see CVA, Add. MSS 332, Loc. 541-C-3, File 5.

Conclusion

In 1944 Parliament provided longshoremen with the legal framework to establish an independent longshoreman`s union on the Vancouver waterfront. However the government merely legitimized the conditions that had already developed in the work place. Due to labour shortages, the war, changing political realities, assimilation between old and new workers, the emergence of alternate voices in the Federation, the dispatch structures that had been in place since 1923, and the ability of the post-35 work force to understand and navigate those structures, the union's culture of solidarity was already in place before the government acted. The nature of the work and dispatch culled out all but the most independent men even before the Federation began their own culling process through dismissals. Operating within the confines of the company union longshoremen had gained at least partial rotation dispatch, and equalization of earnings within skill sets, and between dock and ship work. The Federation's plan to bind men to the employers through the gang system had failed. Due to the employers' disloyalty, fluctuating work, and a lack of connection between the men and the employers, longshoremen understood that they owed nothing to an employer that exploited them as a commodity. Individually they sold their skills at the hall on a daily basis, institutionalizing the permanent casual nature of longshoring that has remained the cornerstone of longshore solidarity for seventy five years. In a multi-employer work place governed by anonymity between employers and employees the collective agreement and subsidiary rules became the primary arena of interaction between the parties. Confronted with the fact that longshoremen had voted the ILWU as their bargaining representative in Vancouver, the Federation issued a letter to all member companies claiming, "We frequently have points at issue with the union and in all too many cases the friction is caused by a lack of understanding of the rules and working conditions or

indifference to the welfare of the men which is an obligation. We are about to see a new world: no longer may we look at master and servant in the old interpretation. We have to think in terms of mutual interest."[1] After twenty years of company unionism, two strikes, wholesale blacklisting, a police riot, and the destruction of two unions, stripped of their traditional ability to promote accusations of communism, sedition, and foreign influence the Federation was finally forced to consider that their attitude and indifference to their own work rules had to change. The Federation and union moved into a new era, not as partners but as adversaries in an institutionalized casual labour environment, where daily confrontation over, the dispatch, work force composition, and collective agreement, insured that class lines were never blurred, and a constantly developing longshore solidarity was insured. [2]

In 2010 the ILWU commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the "Battle of Ballantyne." In that time the ILWU has grown into a major militant rank and file union with global connections in the labour community. The Vancouver ILWU maintains a militant job focused union culture that is a daily, front line, in the trenches challenge to the prerogatives of unfettered capital. The hall, the dispatch the fluctuating nature of the work, the innate antagonism between employer and employees, and the casual nature of the job, all factors that created a culture of solidarity in the company union period, are still in place. They survived the development of the Federation between 1923 and 1935, were revived in the second company union period, and became an institution over seventy-five years of industrial relations. The collective agreement has matured into a major document with clauses dating back to the company union era. Published as a handbook it is buttressed by separate "Black Book" subsidiary agreements, complex dispatch rules, precedent-setting arbitration rulings, and past practice verbal agreements. These documents constitute the main arena of contention and negotiation between longshoremen and their employers. They are analyzed and dissected on a daily basis by rank and file longshoremen, foremen, union business agents, superintendents,

1 CVA, Add. MSS 279, Loc. 520-F-2, File 1, Shipping Federation memo, Aug. 22 1944.

2 On the "goldfish-bowl" openness of the post company union hiring system and its propensity for solidarity building see Larrowe, *Shape-up and Hiring Hall*,pp.143-145.

union officials, and company officials for language that may provide any work place advantage. Language disputes range from on the job disputes between workers and foremen to industry wide arbitrations where attorneys and union officials contest the interpretation of a single word in a subsection of a contentious clause.

In 2010 infrastructural change of the magnitude not seen since the 1920s is again challenging the resilience of that militant culture. The growth of container traffic since the 1970s has decimated the level of break bulk cargo in the port. The number of general cargo gangs, at times over fifty in the past, has contracted to a mere six. Lumber, pulp, and even logs are now frequently shipped in containers. As historian William Finlay claimed, containerization makes for a lonely port.[3] Workers are cocooned in heavy equipment such as tractor-trailers, massive forklifts, and dock cranes. Unlike general cargo, where loading is influenced by a multitude of factors requiring communication and teamwork, container handling can be broken down into a collection of closely monitored tasks performed by a small number of men operating huge equipment. Vessel loading and discharge is based on the number of twenty-foot containers handled, and expected production figures are posted on lunchroom walls. Longshoremen on a container job are rarely beyond the monitoring range of supervisory staff. Loading machinery is equipped with a two way radio, operators are always within radio range of management, and talk is restricted to topics relevant to production. Bulk operations such as coal and sulphur are carried out with even less, manpower than containers. Belt ship loaders run by a single operator deliver tons of cargo to a vessel per hour. Directed by radio, the operator's primary contact in the loading process is a company foreman. The remains of declining general cargo and lumber operations have also been subjected to isolating factors. Winches are no longer at the top of the hatch where men working in the hold below are within vocal contact. Towering deck cranes and gantries have distanced operators from communication with fellow longshoreman in the hatch. The range of the cranes, square hatches without wings, and automatic cargo releases, have reduced the number of men working in the hold. Similar to bulk cargo a

[3] William Finlay, *Work on the Waterfront: Worker power and Technological Change in a West Coast Port.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

foreman with a radio has replaced the shouted voice commands, hand signals, and teamwork that previously governed the loading of general cargo. Coffee breaks are staggered to facilitate continuous operations throughout the shift, removing another traditional opportunity for men to gather and discuss job issues and complaints. Separate lunchrooms have been built to isolate machine operators, foremen, labourers, and maintenance workers from each other to prevent socialization and solidarity. On all operations workers are frequently cocooned in their machine environment with opportunities for solidarity building socialization severely limited.

The hall, the cornerstone of longshore solidarity is now under attack by computerization. Vancouver's waterfront workforce no longer lives predominately in the east end of the city as it had in the past. Dispersed throughout Vancouver, the Fraser Valley, Squamish, and in some cases as far away as the Cariboo and Okanagan, the daily trip to the hall has become a lengthy drive for many longshoremen. Capitalizing on the dispersal of the men, the employers are threatening a telephone or computer dispatch. They claim workers living long distances from the hall would benefit from an automated dispatch, but such a dispatch system would also allow the employers to cease paying for the maintenance of a dispatch hall on an expensive piece of Vancouver real estate. Furthermore an automated dispatch would be a crushing blow to longshore solidarity. The hall where the dispatch is monitored to insure democracy and fairness would be gone. Without union observers, work could be distributed according to the employers' whim arousing the suspicion that Crombie warned of eighty years ago. The socializing at the hall that has promoted solidarity since 1923 would be gone. These are infrastructural threats to traditional longshore solidarity that will dominate the second decade of this century. The challenge for current longshoremen will be to confront them the way their predecessors did between 1923 and 1945, and find new methods to insure solidarity, militancy, and security going forward in the new millennium.

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